

ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS



CHRISTMAS
1898

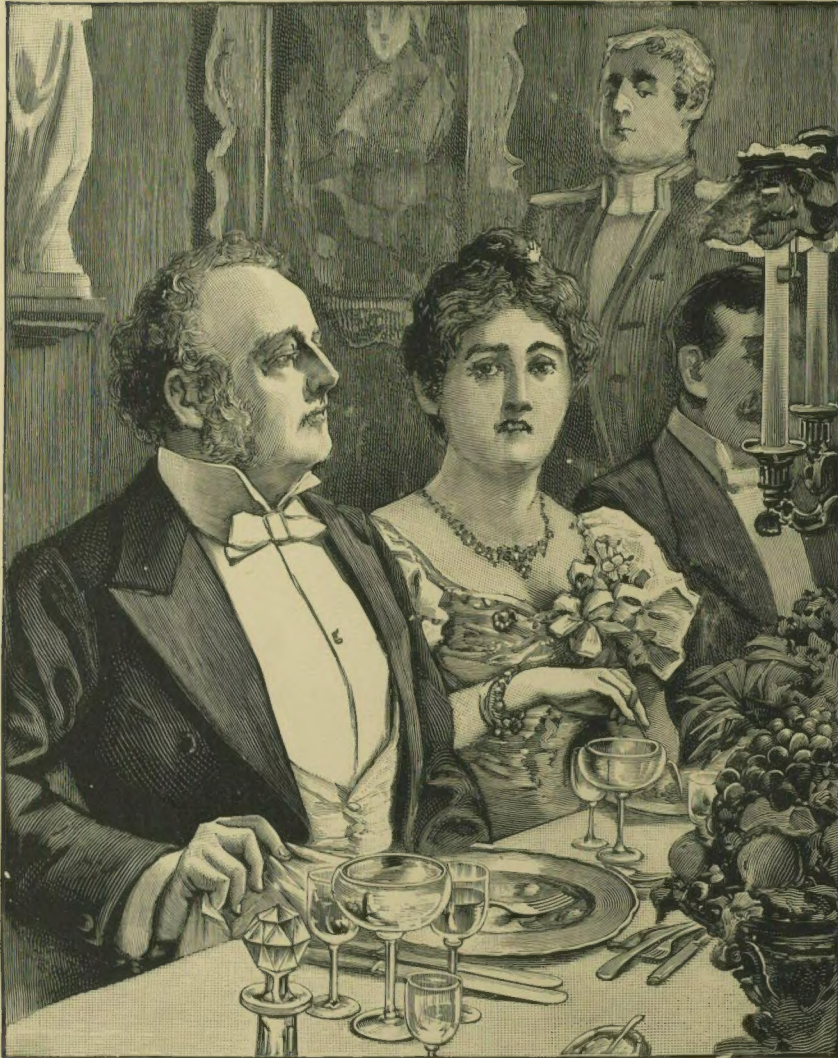
'What do We Live for, if not to Make Life less difficult for Each Other?'—GEORGE ELIOT.

We shut our eyes, the flowers bloom on;
We murmur, but the corn-ears fill;

We choose the shadow, but the sun
That casts it shines behind us still.

And each good thought or action moves the dark world nearer to the sun.—WHITTIER.

LIGHT WHEN THOU ELSE WERT BLIND! SYMPATHY! STRENGTH WHEN LIFE'S SURGES RUDEST ROLL.



Millais' Great Xmas Heart!

"Millais himself was occasionally induced to repeat the following anecdote, which is said by a personal friend to be new: I found myself (said the late P.R.A.) seated one evening at a rather grand dinner, next to a very pretty gushing girl, to whom I had not been introduced. She fired into conversation directly she had finished her soup, and as it was May began it with the inevitable question, 'I suppose you've been to the Academy?' I replied that I had. 'And did you notice the Millais?' Didn't you think they were awful daubs? I can't imagine how such things ever get hung—!' She was going on gaily in the same strain, while I sat silent, when suddenly the amused smiles of those around her and the significant hush brought her to a sudden stop. She coloured rather painfully, and whispered to me in a frightened voice, 'For heaven's sake, what have I done? Have I said anything dreadful? Do tell me.' 'Not now,' I replied, 'eat your dinner in peace, and I'll tell you by-and-by.' She did so, rather miserably, vainly trying to extract from me at intervals what the matter was, and when the dessert came I filled up her glass with champagne, and told her to gulp it down *very quickly* when I counted three. She obeyed without protest, and I took the opportunity when she *couldn't speak*. I grasped her hand and said, 'I am Millais, let's be Friends.'"

MORAL:—*Never blend Pain or Pride with the meanest thing that feels.*—WORDSWORTH

AND SUCH IS HUMAN LIFE—SO GLIDING ON; IT GLIMMERS LIKE A METEOR, AND IS GONE.

WHAT HIGHER AIM CAN MAN ATTAIN THAN CONQUEST OVER HUMAN PAIN?

IMPORTANT TO TRAVELLERS AT HOME AND ABROAD.—"Did the world stand still or did the generation that is to be benefit very fully by the experience gathered by their predecessors, but little necessity would exist for dwelling upon the special recommendations of ENO'S world-famous 'FRUIT SALT'. It is not too much to say that its merits have been published, tested, and approved literally from pole to pole, and that its cosmopolitan popularity to-day presents one of the most signal illustrations of commercial enterprise to be found in our trading records. In view of the constant and steady influx of new buyers into all the markets of the world, it is impossible to rest on laurels, however arduously won or freshly gathered; and for this reason I have pleasure in again, though briefly, directing the attention of readers of this journal to the genuine qualities possessed by ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT'. Residents in the fever-haunted regions to be found in some of our colonial possessions, travellers at home and abroad, dwellers in the tropics, the *bon vivant* no less than the man to whom the recommendation, 'Eat and be merry,' is a sarcasm and a gibe—one and all may, with advantage to themselves, be reminded of a remedy that meets their special requirements with a success approaching the miraculous."—*European Mail*.

STIMULANTS.—CONGESTION OF THE LIVER.—Experience shows that Acidulated Sherbet masked with Sugar, Hazardous Brain Tipples, or any form of Pick-me-up, Porter, Mild Ales, Port Wine, Dark Sherries, Sweet Champagne, Liqueurs, and Brandies, are all very apt to disagree, while Light White Wines, and Gin or Old Whisky, largely diluted with pure Mineral Water, will be found the least objectionable. ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' is PARTICULARLY ADAPTED for ANY constitutional WEAKNESS of the LIVER. It possesses the power of operation where digestion has been disturbed or lost, and PLACES the INVALID on the RIGHT TRACK to HEALTH.

ONLY TRUTH CAN GIVE TRUE REPUTATION—ONLY REALITY CAN BE OF REAL PROFIT—THE SECRET OF SUCCESS—STERLING HONESTY OF PURPOSE—WITHOUT IT LIFE IS A SHAM.

The value of ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' cannot be told. Its success in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australia, and New Zealand proves it.

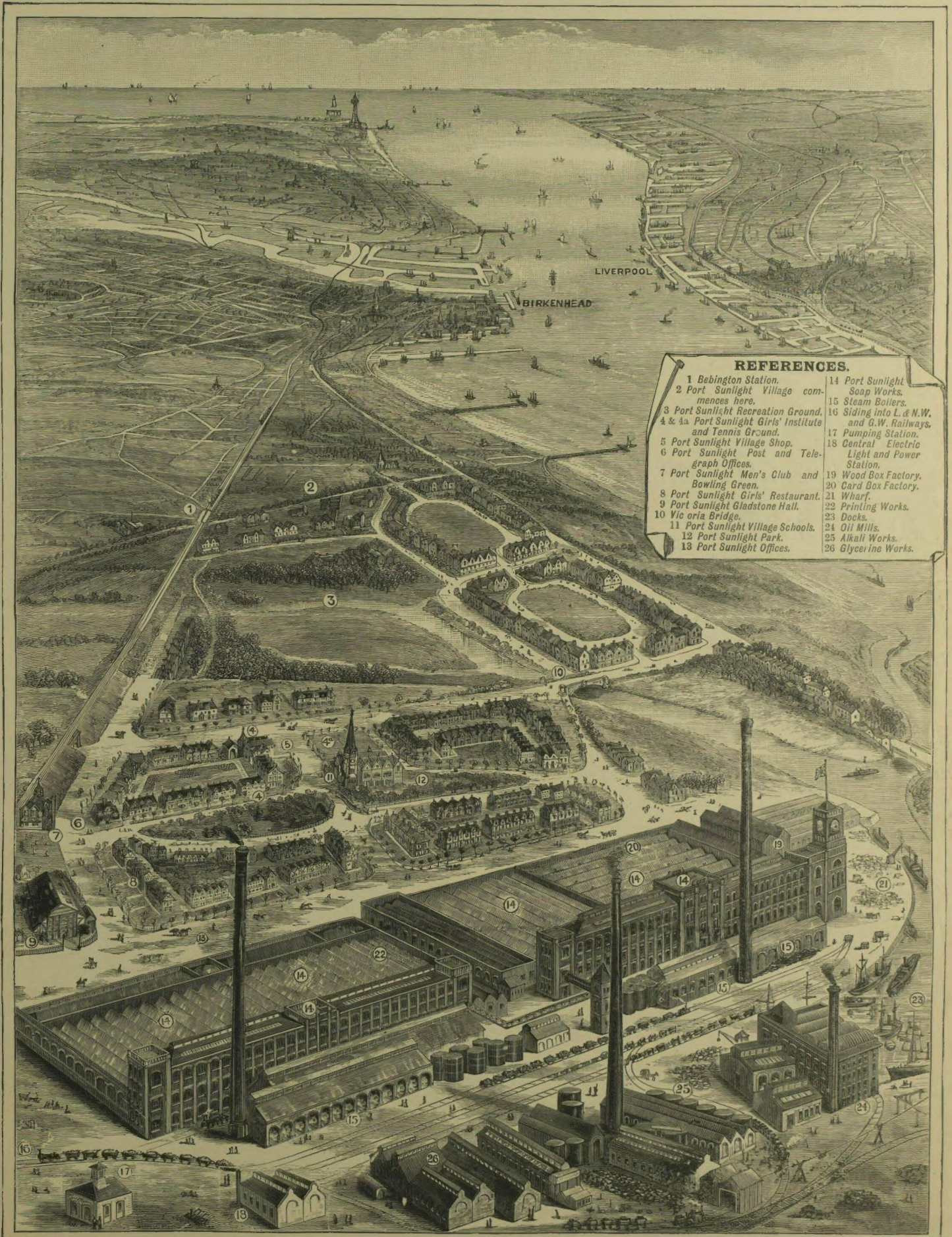
THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT where it has been taken in the earliest stages of a disease it has, in innumerable instances, PREVENTED what would otherwise have been a SERIOUS ILLNESS. The effect of ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT' upon any DISORDERED, SLEEPLESS, and FEVERISH condition is SIMPLY MARVELLOUS. It is, in fact, NATURE'S OWN REMEDY, and an UNSURPASSED ONE.

CAUTION.—Examine each Bottle, and see the Capsule is marked ENO'S 'FRUIT SALT'. Without it you have been imposed upon by WORTHLESS imitations.

Prepared only by J. C. ENO Ltd 'FRUIT SALT' WORKS LONDON SE. by J. C. ENO'S PATENT

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Where SUNLIGHT and LIFEBOUOY SOAPS are Made.



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| 5 Port Sunlight Village Shop. | 18 Central Electric Light and Power Station. |
| 6 Port Sunlight Post and Telegraph Offices. | 19 Wood Box Factory. |
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DUE AND CONTINUOUS ELIMINATION

is now recognised by all Physicians to be the chief requisite for the Restoration and Preservation of Health.

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IS THE BEST ELIMINANT.

Over Five Hundred CONFIDENTIAL Communications from EMINENT Medical Practitioners throughout the World have been received testifying to the remarkable and unique value and efficacy of "APENTA" NATURAL MINERAL WATER, both for CONTINUOUS USE by the CONSTIPATED, the GOUTY, and the OBESE, and as an OCCASIONAL LAXATIVE.

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THE BEST PURGATIVE WATER.

OF ALL CHEMISTS AND MINERAL WATER DEALERS.

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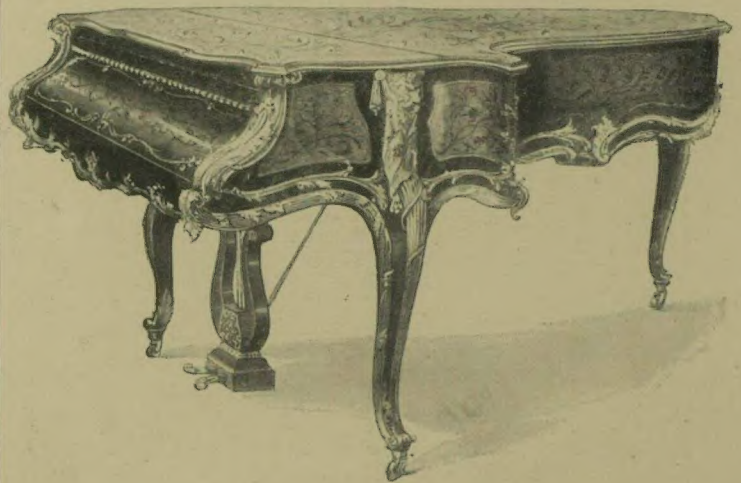
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ALL GOODS sold at Manufacturers' CASH PRICES, effecting a saving of 33 per cent.

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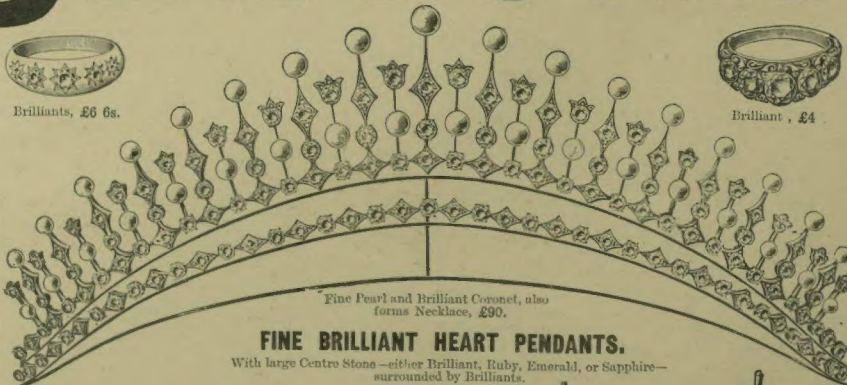
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Brilliant, £6 6s.



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With large Centre Stone—either Brilliant, Ruby, Emerald, or Sapphire—surrounded by Brilliants.



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Brilliant Crescent, £10. Other Sizes up to £500.



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VENUS'S APPLE. £250.



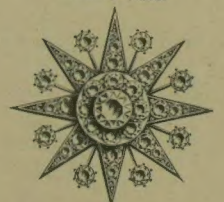
Gem Links, £5.



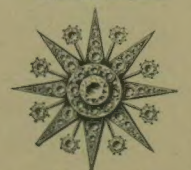
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CHRISTMAS NUMBER



Hand. Tinsdale 73

"HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING."

BOVRIL=STRENGTH



Bovril not only stimulates bodily and mental activity, but it nourishes, strengthens and sustains. In fact

BOVRIL

is strength—concentrated strength. It is the vital principle of prime ox beef, containing more nourishment in the smallest possible bulk than any other liquid food known. Physicians prescribe Bovril for its great nutritive, restorative, and stimulative properties. It

MAKES THE WEAK STRONG

and the most delicate invalids can take it when solid food, home made beef-tea, and ordinary meat extracts are rejected. It is as appetising as it is reinvigorating. Bovril thoroughly fortifies the system against Colds, Chills, and Influenza. To repeat, it makes the weak strong

AND THE STRONG STRONGER

FRY'S COCOA

"LET ME PUT MY LIPS
TO IT WHEN I AM SO
DISPOSED."

Sairey Camp



"THE STRONGEST AND BEST COCOA."—Health.
250 Gold Medals & Diplomas.

FROM

A Lecture on Cocoa

BY

DR. ANDREW WILSON, F.R.S.E., &c.

"A Cocoa Bean is a kind of Vegetable Egg, which contains all that is needed to build up a living body. . . . Cocoa is a combination of foods—of true foods in every sense of the term. . . . But see that you get a really good Cocoa. I should say use

Fry's

PURE CONCENTRATED

Cocoa

which is my Ideal of Perfection.

There is No Better Food."

N.B.—SOLD ONLY IN TINS WITH GILT TOPS.



JOHN A. LOMAX.

"THE RECONCILIATION."

AFTER THE PAINTING BY JOHN A. LOMAX.



"A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL!"



THE REAL SANTA CLAUS.

Old Santa Claus takes silken guise,
And comes when weary childish eyes
Are fast asleep.

His heralds bring the dolls and toys
For dreaming little girls and boys
In slumber deep.

Dream wildly of his wintry beard,
Half-loved, and yet, I fancy, feared
One learns, alas! when years do pass,
That mothers peep.

ALARM OF BURGLARS AT A FANCY BALL.



THE SEARCH.



THE CAPTURE.

A LAGGARD LOVER.

BY GELETT BURGESS.

PAUL had said so much about my resemblance to my great-grandmother, Rebecca Seton, and had spoken so very warmly of her beauty, that I confess I dreaded to risk the comparison, and stand beside the portrait that night as they wished me to do. So I made every sort of excuse when I was asked to go into the drawing-room.

"You are more like her than you think, Frances," said Uncle Mark. "Becky Seton was famous for her beauty all over Surrey in her day, but she was talked of for more than her good looks. Of course, you know all about her love-affairs. It is a very pretty story, and you narrowly escaped being born a Seton. Everyone thought Becky was engaged to her cousin Richard when she eloped."

"Some women are born Setons," I began flippantly, "some achieve Setons." ". . . And then I caught sight of Paul looking at me with such a queer face. I omitted the rest of the parody, and asked, "Why didn't Becky marry Richard?"

"Oh, he was a bad lot: he was my grandfather, you know!" And Uncle Mark, the dearest old man that ever was, smiled to himself. "Becky kept him on pins and needles, blowing hot and blowing cold—waiting for Goodloe to propose, I fancy."

"I'll not stand that!" I exclaimed. "You're insulting both my great-

there. Then they must have heard Dicky calling for his partner, and she picked up her skirts and ran—for the carriage!"

Mollie came in just then with the old Bible, and her father opened it and began turning the pages. "See here!" he began; "this is the way they did it. Goodloe marked a passage with a little dash, like this, and put the number of the page on the fly-leaf, and Becky marked hers in the same way—with a cypher. You can follow the whole game, up to the time when it began to be a bit too serious for Mistress Becky's policy." He began with Proverbs iii. 15, and from there the verses skipped back and forth, through Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and Solomon's Song, something like this—

She is more precious than rubies; and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her.

His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud; under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

Behold, thou art fair, my love; thou hast doves' eyes.

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love.

Many daughters have, 'one virtuously, but thou excellest them all.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee; love her, and she shall keep thee.

I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye.

Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me; thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Hearken! O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people and thy father's house.

For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people?

If it was strange to hear one's great-grandmother's love-messages read off in her own house after so many years, it was still more interesting to watch the changing of such a fine face as Paul Seton's during the recital. I had been with



"They say that up to the moment when she saw the carriage lights, Becky hadn't decided which of them to accept."

grandparents at once. Becky couldn't ask him his intentions, could she? And I'm sure he was only waiting for the psychological moment."

"Well, Goodloe was not exactly what you would call a languid lover. No fear! I say, Mollie, go and get Becky's old Bible; it's in the drawing-room. I'll show you as pretty a piece of flirtation as you could wish. Dicky carried her by storm, at last, with a very audacious little *coup*, which was quite the way to manage a madcap like Becky."

"Please be careful! You forget how much I am like her," I interrupted.

"Oh, you forget we're all Setons here, and we take after our harmless old grandfather," said Uncle Mark, but Paul bit his lip. "Well, there was a big party on one Christmas week, here in this very house, mind you, and everybody was invited, but she was such a coquette that no one knew which of the rivals she favoured. Her father insisted upon her marrying Dick Seton, to keep the estate in the family, and Becky's nurse was the go-between on the other side, and did all she could for Goodloe, who was the handsomer man of the two. They say that up to the moment when she saw the carriage lights Becky hadn't decided which of them to accept."

"I'm sure I would have known my own mind," said I; "but, of course, if the right one didn't have the spirit to propose——" I bit my lip. "How *did* she decide?"

"She had divided up her dances very artfully that evening, but Goodloe got a chance, during one of his turns, to ask her to go outside in the Park for a little walk in the moonlight. She was always ready for mischief, and they slipped out without being noticed, except by Dick Seton, who followed their footprints in the snow and found one of her slippers by the gate. Goodloe had his carriage all ready, and he didn't propose to her till she saw it and asked him why it was

him pretty constantly since I had first met him, and if I was not in love I was in that troubled state that so often precedes it. It was growing somewhat too tense for my composure, however, so I pleaded fatigue, excused myself, and went upstairs. My room had been Becky Seton's own chamber in old days. Was she really as like me as they said? I must see the portrait that night. The story of her love affair worked on my imagination too vividly for me to wait, and I resolved to go down to the drawing-room as soon as the house was quiet. So, after an hour, I took a light and tip-toed downstairs. I found my way easily enough, opened the door, and entered the room.

The full moon had cast a prism of light through the leaded window, stenciling the pattern of its sash upon the parquet and blazoning the floor with the cross-crosslets of the Seton arms. Beyond this the room showed dully; there was little furniture, so that the pictures showed conspicuously upon the closely panelled wainscot. I lighted a lamp and a candelabrum upon the table, gave a quick look round the apartment for the portrait, and then my eyes met it as if I had suddenly come opposite a mirror.

Becky Seton had been as beautiful as they said, surely. I stood studying her, point for point, as if she were my rival. I had her hair and her hands, if not all the piquancy of her face and that old-time modelling one sees so seldom nowadays. She had a fascinating little scar, like a soft shadow or a deep dimple, on the side of her chin, that I envied more than anything else. There was much else in her face that I fancied I understood, and I went to a looking-glass for confirmation. By many evidences I was sure I had her temperament, and was bound by subtle sympathy to her. Well, my life had not been quite so interesting as hers, but these were different times! I sat down in the window, where I had

a good view of the portrait, and fell into a wandering mood. I tried to imagine the ball in this room, so long ago; but somehow, I could not help putting Paul in the place of that ancestor of mine who had hurried this maid (so like me) out of the chamber and into his coach outside. If men were as gallant as that nowadays, I thought, one could decide more easily. And then I must have fallen asleep.

Something seemed to be moving in the chamber, something which approached and became recognisable as two figures, a man and a woman, in seventeenth-century costume. They slowly promenaded the circuit of the apartment, with a look at each other now and again, as if in a discussion without words. Their faces were always turned from me, but the old portraits prompted me with hints of costume, and I knew that these were Sir Melville Seton and his wife. As they passed the window and disappeared in the moonlight, which seemed to dissolve their forms, I saw that there were others in the room. Some were no more distinct than waving shadows, diaphanous in the flare of the candles, and achieving a greater congruity in the darker parts of the room, as if clad in phosphorescence. They came and went to no purpose that I could see, and seemed to disregard each other, as beings of different generations. Indeed, the whole scene was phantasmagoric and elusive, like the shifting of a half-focussed lantern-slide, or a dissolving view, till I saw the hall-door slowly opening and a new face peered in.

The last comer showed more distinctly than the rest, so much so that I could hardly tell whether it was human being or spirit. He was a young man in periwig

showing the stitches running back and forth in long triangles. But there was something else! Beneath the leather I saw the corner of a folded paper. I picked at it carefully, and finally succeeded in getting the note out from its hiding-place. I had hardly taken it in my hand, however, when a noise behind me brought my heart into my mouth, and I turned suddenly. At first I dared not believe my eyes; they had deceived me too often that night. But it was Paul!

He was standing in the doorway, looking in, so like that other figure I had seen, his face as white, and his eyes gleaming in the candlelight.

"You here!" he exclaimed, and I fancied I noticed a tone of relief in his voice. "I thought I heard a noise, and I came down to find out what was up."

"I came down to make the acquaintance of my great-grandmother. Now you may see which you really like the better!"

"Frances, you *are* like her! But I was a bit afraid of you at first, though; you looked so transparent in the moonlight." Then he became more serious. "I wonder if you are like her enough not to know your own mind—or mine!"

"Do I understand that I am having a Seton thrust upon me?" I said wickedly, for his manner left no doubt that he had decided that this was the "psychological moment" with which I had twitted him.

"Come, Frances, I am in earnest," he said. "Will you accept me?"

Now he had said it I grew frightened, and I saw that I must make up my mind without delay. I looked up at Becky's portrait, and I thought I understood her better than ever. Then I thought of the note in my hand; it was in a woman's



He came up to the window and stood in the shaft of moonlight, listening.

and small-clothes of the latter part of the last century. His face was narrow, and lighted with a boyish eager expression; his eyebrows, drawn in two whimsical dark curves under the white hair of his wig, accented the alertness of his aspect and the deliberation of his movements.

There was that in his bearing which forbade terror, and my only fear was that he should notice me and disappear before his errand was accomplished; for that he was on some more definite mission than the other phantoms I was sure. Nothing could be stranger than his demeanour, passing amongst the other figures, his eyes questing to right and left, but seeing nothing. He came up to the window and stood in the shaft of moonlight, listening. If he had seen me it would not have been so dreadful, but he gazed vacantly in my direction. Then something caused him to change his mind, and he crossed the room rapidly.

There was a row of bookshelves against the wall, before which he stopped. He gave a quick glance over his shoulder, and then took a note from one of the books and turned in my direction, with a sudden smile on his face. Involuntarily I turned my eyes for a moment, in embarrassment.

When I looked up again the room was empty, and in the hall outside a clock whirled and struck two. The candles were low in their sockets: I must have been asleep a longer time than I had thought. I arose, bewildered and agitated by my vision, and crossed to the bookcases with a light. My eyes fell immediately upon Becky's old Bible, which had been returned to its place, and I opened it with great excitement. Surely there had been love-letters, too, if my dream were true, and the old Bible must have been the lovers' post-office!

The book was somewhat crudely bound in leather, dry and cracked by time. The end papers had curled away from where the covers were sewn to the boards,

writing, I was sure. Perhaps I could trust her blindly—at any rate, the spirit of her mischief was in me, even when I should be most serious. As one tosses up a coin to decide a doubt, and yet resolves not to follow its direction unless it comes down as one wishes, so I handed him the note. "Here is your answer," I said.

He opened it with a puzzled face, and as he read it beside the flame of the candle the corners of his mouth fell. "Oh, Frances!" he gasped.

"What does it say?" I cried in some alarm, and I reached for the letter.

"Why, don't you know?" he said, very much perplexed, but with a return of hope in his face.

I had to confess that I didn't, and he gravely read this letter—

My deare Cousin,—If you think I shall relish such slye Impertinence as you have shown, it is evident that you do not knowe me. I am notte used to being Spied upon, tho' you be mine own Cousin, and have the Runne of this House. I will notte submit to be watched, & soe I shall have no more of you. As to your Distresse at beeing Discover'd, Pray read yore Testament at Prov. ii. 26—"I alsoe will laugh at yore Calamity: I will mock when yore Fear cometh."—R. S.

The look of my face reassured him, and he read his answer in my embarrassment and alarm. When I explained my dream and the ghostly lover who had prompted me, he could not help laughing. "This letter was for poor old Dicky!" he said. "I wonder what she said to Goodloe, though," and he looked at me very audaciously, and came much nearer. "What was it, Frances? Tell me!"

"She said nothing at all," I replied. "She shook his arm, and he hurried her out of the room—like this," I added, for Paul had taken his cue by this time. "And when they got into the hall—" I continued.

"He took her in his arms and kissed her—like this!" said Paul



Just for a moment a flash in the glow,
Through the gathering night and the swift falling snow
Down from the door to the carriage they go :
And the evening's enjoyment is ended.

AFTER THE DANCE.

But a glad recollection is lighting her eyes,
And John, as he looks at her, inwardly sighs—
"Now, were I not chained to this liveried disguise—
But no matter, least said's soonest mended!"



When brother Jack comes home from sea
At Christmas time, he keeps us jolly,
And teaches Bertha, May, and me
To twine the mistletoe and holly.

THE LASS THAT LOVES A SAILOR.

He tells us tales, with eyes aglow,
Of fairy islands in the West ;
And he's so true and kind—I know
Why girls must love a sailor best.



SNOWBALLING.



After defeat, a fleeting hour
They sought a hospitable hearth,
Where friends, despite the War-Fiend's power,
Kept the old feast of Peace on Earth.

THE FUGITIVES' CHRISTMAS EVE.

But when, the hasty glass scarce drained,
The foe came thundering at the gate,
Despair a moment's victory gained.
The next, they rose and conquered Fate.



"CHRISTIANS, AWAKE, AND GREET THE HAPPY MORN."

The SPECTRE OF MONKTON

BY
MAX PEMBERTON



W. H. R. 1887

Pears' Soap

Has passed into a Proverb.

A Dozen Proverbial Applications.

A SOAP that has been a household favourite for a hundred years has a history. In that time it becomes part of the history of the nation, and, being of universal acceptance, passes into the familiar language of the people—in a word, it becomes proverbial. Pears' Soap means cleanliness; Pears' Soap means health; Pears' Soap means purity; Pears' Soap means honesty. It must therefore be linked with the proverbs of the country. Let us examine the links.

I. Necessity is the mother of invention.—A hundred years ago a fine, pure, wholesome toilet soap became a necessity, and Messrs. Pears invented the famous soap that has ever since borne their name.

II. Soap is the pilot of civilization.—Prior to soap was barbarism; as soap extended its sphere, enlightenment followed; and from the time of the introduction of Pears' Soap to the present day civilization has advanced by leaps and bounds.

III. Health is preferable to wealth.—Health is, or ought to be, man's first consideration; without it, wealth is useless to him. Pears' Soap keeps the skin in perfect health.

IV. Habit is second nature.—Those who use Pears' Soap once, use it always; the habit of health becomes theirs; they can never relinquish it.

V. Time tries all.—Time, as represented by a century of 36,524 days, 5 hrs., 22 mins., 50 secs., has fully tried and approved of Pears' Soap, pronouncing it to be the purest and best.

VI. What everybody says must be true.—In the homes of rich and poor, Pears' Soap is everywhere used, and all who use it give it the praise that is its due.

VII. When doctors differ, who shall decide?—But the fact is, doctors do *not* differ in their opinions of Pears' Soap. Sir Erasmus Wilson, F.R.S., late President of the Royal College of Surgeons, England, the great Skin doctor, said it "is the most agreeable of balms for the skin;" Mr. J. L. Milton, the renowned Dermatologist, writes: "Nothing has answered so well, or proved so beneficial to the Skin as Pears' Soap;" and Dr. James Startin, in his work upon the "Skin and Complexion," writes: "There is, however, *one soap* which has met with such warm commendation from writers that it should be mentioned here, *as I can endorse all that has been written and said* by the late Mr. Startin, Sir Erasmus Wilson, and Dr. Tilbury Fox, concerning it. It was through *their* instrumentality that, on account of its purity, Pears' Soap was introduced into hospitals. It has obtained a world-wide reputation, and deservedly so." Dr. Redwood, Ph.D., F.I.C., F.C.S., late Professor of Chemistry and Pharmacy to the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, says: "I have never come across another toilet soap which so closely realises my ideal of perfection;" and Dr. Anna Kingsford pronounced it "delectable."

VIII. All's well that ends well.—Pears' Soap is usable to the very last particle.

IX. There is safety in numbers.—No fewer than Twenty Prize Medals have been awarded to Pears' Soap at as many great International Exhibitions.

X. Beauty is only skin deep.—All the more necessary then to attend to the skin, and keep it clear from impurities. Pears' Soap ensures a proper performance of the functions of the skin, and keeps the complexion in its natural bloom.

XI. A penny saved is a penny gained.—Pears' Soap represents the truest economy. As it is the best and lasts longest, so it is the cheapest.

XII. Handsome is that handsome does.—There are so many dangerous and even poisonous soaps in the market that a thoroughly reliable article like Pears' Soap, that accomplishes all that is claimed for it, is a public boon.

The Teaching of Proverbial Philosophy:
PEARS' SOAP.

SPECTRE of MONKTON

By

Max PEMBERTON

ILLUSTRATED BY A. FORESTIER.

CHAPTER I.

I AGREE WITH MY AUNT ELIZA.

MY AUNT ELIZA stands to me for many things—but more than all she is typical of Christmas Day. There is, to be sure, her quarterly encounter with the rascally butcher, who has floated to prosperity upon a wave of ill-gotten pence which should have been three-farthings; and no Easter passes which does not bring me knitted underwear with a hamper of her dandelion tea. But Christmas is her day of days.

It would ill become me to express any feelings but those of an affection most profound for my Aunt Eliza and all that appertains to her. The canaries which sing at our fireside (the dears need warmth as well as human beings) may be a slight inconvenience in a room which is at no time too large for its purposes; her feline accessories, to a person who detests cats, are a burden of life which many would find intolerable; an association of weak, of very weak, whisky and water with the ten "Predicaments," or the five rivers of Purgatory, is calculated to irritate a person of more sensitive nerves than the poor country practitioner can permit himself to possess. Nevertheless I do not hate my Aunt Eliza; I do not even begrudge her the place at our table which she occupies every Christmas. There are moments when I think her the sweetest old soul in all the island of Thanet.

My Aunt Eliza is going soon. She told me so ten years ago; she repeated the assertion yesterday. Her long, long home is ready for her.

"Don't spend my money on the heathen, Dick," she said, "and don't let that fire-water muddle your poor brains. They never were strong, and the Lord only knows what is to become of my boy when I'm gone."

There might be some who, in all the vigour of the juvenility of thirty-two, would object to the style of "Dick, my poor boy." I have no such objection. The world discounts the bills of our years and gives us pitiful change out of them. The child of ten sees the "old man" of thirty. I am a boy to my Aunt Eliza, and I glory in the title. The dangers of which she speaks do not afright me. I shall not give her hoarded savings to the heathen. I feel sure of it. And if I float upon one of the five streams—well, well, let it be good whisky, and the dear old soul herself shall find me an island somewhere, even if it be in Acheron itself.

I say that my aunt is associated with my Christmas Day. It is a way of speaking, for she has coloured my life for twenty years or more. But for her dandelion tea and the breastplate of pure wool (which covers your back and shoulders, and is to be worn until May is out) there would be no Dick Rhymers to give his pills to the poor of Minster and of Monkton and to the rich of Ramsgate and the coasts thereby. He would be under the cold green grass. She says so herself. And certainly, but for her, the story of "poor Dick's" ghost would never have been written. "You have never done anything in your life but that, Dick," she says, "and write it you shall. It will be for your children to read." My children. Ha, ha! I must go and tell Alice about that.

I have often thought that the young Earl would write the story himself. I said as much to him one day, but he answered me abruptly. "Oh, my god-father!" he said. He was breaking in a thoroughbred at the time. I did not pursue the subject, but returned to my aunt. Eliza was always a splendid woman; but she was heroic in that moment.

"The Earl write it—that horse-breeding man with a face like a pumpkin. Oh, Dick! Dick! where are your poor brains going to? Can he spell through the Catechism, I wonder? Can he write his name upon a cheque that, but for you, he might never have had to draw? Be up and doing, laddy! You shall

have one reader, I promise you. Ah! Dick, dear, how proud I'd be to see my boy's name!"

I did not confess to my aunt that one reader would scarcely be a number of my ambitions. For the matter of that, I had long believed that others might care



My Aunt Eliza.

to read the true story of Monkton Abbey, even if old Dick Rhymer himself tried to set it down on paper. To be sure, he is readier with a stethoscope than a pen; and he has never told a story before in all his life. But, then, here is something from which all the world has plucked its straws of gossip; and here, too, is the story of a man's own life, the hour of it which made his happiness, the hour which gave him—ah! that was an hour indeed.

And certainly my Aunt Eliza is right, and the story of Monkton should be told by somebody.

CHAPTER II.

AS DEAD AS QUEEN ANNE.

My aunt says that I am to write the story of Monkton, and I am going to think about it. Sometimes when I open the private drawer of my bureau (there's a tumbler there and other little things beside the papers) a whole gallery of dead Earls is revealed to my view. Yet who cares for them? They were fine fellows to be sure, and more than one of them came by his death through drink; but to me they are no more than pictures. "John William," who followed the Stuarts to the

its doors once more; for all that I could see, the grass was not less green nor the sky less blue because a good man and a wild one had paid his doctor's bill for the last time, and had gone where no "Predicaments" would trouble him.

It is not for me to write any panegyric upon the late Lord Monkton. Many's the glass of good port wine I've drunk at his table in the few months we had him in England. If he never went to church, that was no affair of mine nor of his neighbours; and we had no call to do the parson's business. He was a hard man to some I make sure; and his eccentricities would have locked him up more than once but for the port wine of which I have told. Yet who would sign for a madman that had his cellars full of "forty-seven" and could tap Madeira that was before the failure? Not Dick Rhymer, to be sure; and as for the specialists from London, there was not one of them who put the Madeira to his lips that did not declare my Lord the sanest man in Thanet before his glass was empty.

The old Earl died at Gilgit, and the new Earl came in. It was odd to me to see him about the place; for if there was one name above another that could set my Lord raving, it was the name of his cousin Archibald, who succeeded him in the earldom. Two men more wide asunder were never related



"It's Doctor Rhymer, isn't it?" said the Earl.

Hague; "Francis Talbot," that was the friend of Dicky Steele; "William Marchmont," who broke his neck at Sturry in jumping a gate that was never put up by mortal hands (and, indeed, there was no gate at all just where he fell off his mare); "Robert Charles" who fought with Somerset's Brigade at Waterloo—it's the parson's work to make history of the bones of such; and he's been doing it in ten volumes these twenty years or more. For me, there is but one Earl, and *he* is dead. William Robert, the seventh! If ever I write the story of Monkton, of him I will speak; of him and his strange life and his strange death up in the Himalayas, as all the world knows.

I say that I would tell of his death, yet that is a way of speaking, for no man, save those that write for the new kind of papers, can speak of what they do not know; and when first we heard of Lord Monkton's accident, it would have puzzled the sharpest fellow among them to make a story of it. True, the telegrams said that he was killed by the hill-men at Gilgit, he and his valet Willis, that had gone twice round the world with him in his craze for seeing other people's firesides and forgetting his own; but while we never had enough of the story to bring a maid to the keyhole, a Colonel and his Gurkhas went up to the place, and when they came back the judge gave it out that the Earl was dead, and that was the end of it. We sent for his cousin to succeed him, and tried to forget what the old Earl had thought about him. Those that were not sorry said so; those that were sorry left their cards on the new man and avoided the subject. Monkton Abbey opened

in this world before. The one, a scholar and a traveller, with the blood of kings in his veins, a man of iron heart and iron hatreds; the other a merry lad, who never had the mind to earn a shilling nor to spend one when two would do. What it was in Archibald Kayes that could make a madman of the old Earl I never quite knew. Perhaps his animal spirits helped him. He laughed always—laughed when they ploughed him at Cambridge; laughed when he told his cousin that he had married Nelly Wynne, who came from the Savoy Theatre in London; laughed when the Jews made him bankrupt, and the Earl swore he wouldn't give him another shilling to save his soul from purgatory. And I make sure he laughed the loudest when they came to his shabby house in London and told him that his cousin had gone to a place where they don't make wills, and that Monkton and all that Monkton meant was his.

The old Earl hated the boy; but the old Earl was dead, and Archibald became the master of the Abbey and its treasures. He lived a month at the great house before I saw him, and then it was by accident. I had been called to Birchington to attend a pretty case of compound fracture there, and was riding my old black horse across the upper road from Monkton, when who should come along but the new Earl himself, driving two greys in a high red-wheeled dog-cart; and no sooner did he clap eyes on me than he reined back his pair and gave me a civil "Good evening."

"It's Doctor Rhymer, isn't it?" said he.

"If it isn't," said I, "there's an impostor in Kent and I'll be glad to meet him."

He seemed amused at this, and the little girl at his side—a bundle of mischief, I'll swear—whispered something in his ear very prettily. He nodded, and then went on with it—

"Doctor," he said, "if you'd do me the favour to step over to the Abbey in the morning, I'd be glad that you should see my wife. She's off her feed—doesn't take her grub well at all. Perhaps it's the air in these parts. She's ailing, anyway, and tells me the funniest stories you ever heard in all your life. 'Pon my soul, I'm half frightened to listen to 'em. You'll have to give her a draught or something. Will I see you in the morning?"

"Indeed and you shall," said I, "at the top of it, and her Ladyship, too. I've a case of compound fracture at the farm yonder which is worth a five-pound note of any man's money. When that's looked to, I'm at your service. Perhaps I'll step over this very evening."

"Well," said he, hesitating upon it, "I'd sooner you'd see her in the morning for that matter. She's queerest then—queer enough to startle a man. Come at ten, doctor, and prescribe a pint of champagne for me. I must make Mrs. Kayes—that is, Lady Monkton's—apologies to Miss Rhymmer. We should have been at your place before."

"Oh," cried I, "you needn't mind about that—she isn't much in the pasteboard line! You're the poorer by a glass of ginger wine, my Lord, and that will wait. At ten then——"

He nodded his head and let the leader go. The pretty little good-for-nothing

CHAPTER III.

I GO TO THE ABBEY.

There is nothing like a little fresh air to blow away the cobwebs we take up to bed with us when the night is cold, and we cannot decline that second glass which we ask ourselves to fill for the good-fellowship of it. To be sure, I slept but ill after my return from Birchington; and the wind, which sent the snowflakes whirling across my window-panes, was the very fellow to cherish my delusions. Never did a fire that roared up an honest chimney send so many ghosts to the bedside of a dreamer. The old Earl, Willis, his valet, the pretty little bundle of wickedness that sat by the new Earl's side—there they were, up and down in the figures of the flame, faces of the fire to link the dead and the living, golden spectres bridging the old and the new. But I would believe in none of them. There at my own fireside I laughed at myself, yet must tickle my ears with the story again and again. Willis returned from India! Impossible! As well think to see the old Earl himself. And if he had come back, why should he skulk like a footpad upon the road to the cove? He was never one to turn his back upon me or my half-crowns. It would be a brother of his, no doubt. He was a Kentishman. Of course he would have brothers.

I said nothing of the occurrence to my aunt; nor, indeed, was there any need. The misfortune, which permitted me to assure her that the new Earl wore a little French hat trimmed with sable, was not soon atoned for.

"Dick, my dear," she said, "it always was in your family, and now it's coming to Monkton. I'll see you under a woman's thumb yet, and then God help you!"



He turned quickly down the road to the sea when I put spurs to old Briggy, and for a moment I looked into his very face. Willis himself was staring at me.

at his side looked over her shoulder at me and laughed as they swirled away. I never was one that turned my head to stare at a woman, but I remember that I followed her with my eyes as far as the church at Monkton. "And, my dear," said I to myself, "you'll make some man very happy—or you'll bury him at forty."

It was dusk when I turned down the lane at Birchington to strike the road across the cliffs and the White Bungalow there. Whether meeting the new Earl had set me thinking of the past, or whether it was that my eyes are not what they were (and how can they be, my Aunt Eliza asks, while I smoke that old briar pipe all day?), whether, I say, I dreamed it or really did see the face, I hardly know to this day. Yet, I could have sworn, as I came out on the cliff above the sea, that Willis, the dead Earl's valet, was on the road before me, and that he ran on quickly directly he heard the ring of my horse's hoofs.

I write that I saw him; and that is a thing I could have sworn to in any court of justice. The brown face, the limp black hair of the man, the strange shuffling step, the long awkward arms, the hand into which I had slipped half-a-crown many a day (and been mightily ashamed that it was but half-a-crown): there was no hiding those things from me, swiftly as the fellow ran. For the matter of that, he turned quickly down the road to the sea when I put spurs to old Briggy, and for a moment I looked into his very face. Willis himself was staring at me. If the dead Earl had walked into my study, I had not been the more surprised.

"Willis, Willis?" said I to myself: "but he was shot at Gilgit, too! He was the man that went up to the hills with my Lord. He was the one that the Colonel and his Gurkhas made mention of in all their reports. As dead as Queen Anne, they said. Then what, in Heaven's name, brings him skulking on the cliff road at Birchington?"

Ay, it was a question to set the head thinking. And mine was going like an old mill all the way home to Monkton.

"It would have to be a large thumb, Aunt," said I, "and it's the smallest hand in all Thanet she has, 'or I'm a Scotchman."

My aunt held up her hands in despair, as she was wont to do when she found the fire-water in my private drawer.

"Not a penny of my money, Dick—remember that," she said. "The day she comes to the Mead, that day sees me go."

Well, well; women are queer creatures, to be sure. Here was one that could make a whole history of a little French hat trimmed with sable; and brood upon that history for a week or more. Nay, my aunt flounced up to her bed-room in as pretty a fit of the sulks as ever I wish to see; while I rode over to Monkton, and was at the Abbey gates just as the great clock above the stables struck ten.

There are few who do not know Monkton Abbey, for it lies high, and its pinnacles lift themselves almost above the obelisk that is the seaman's mark for miles around. Elizabethan the antiquary folks call it; while the men in spectacles will tell you that the chapel is Norman, and that there is no finer specimen in the county—ay, nor in all England for that matter. A beautiful old house, to be sure, with a great girdle of oaks and elms and cypress about its gardens, and a wide sweep of turf before its windows to remind you of a cathedral close, or of the colleges you have left behind at Cambridge. Sea there is on both sides of the house: yonder, not four miles away, the little waves tumbling into Minnis Bay; or again, upon the Ramsgate side, the sands of Pegwell, and a distant glimpse of old Sandwich and the hills which the golfing men must climb. As I saw the house that morning there was not a more beautiful thing in all the world, for the snow had dusted its pinnacles and towers, and had made a fairy world of all the leaves about; and had whitened the battlements and spread an untrodden carpet to glisten in the sunlight. And I thought of the old Earl as I rang at the deep-throated bell; and said I to myself, 'twould go hard with some in this house

if I had seen him, and not the ghost of his dead man Willis, upon the road to Birchington yesterday.

There was no sign of the little bundle of mischief in the hall, and a new butler, that did not seem to like me nor my clothes, led me up at once to her Ladyship's boudoir. It was a smallish room—smallish by comparison—in the chapel wing; a dainty nest, with a grand piano and hothouse flowers that must have cost Lord knows how much, and music and books everywhere: the books you buy at railway stations, with plenty of love and murder in them, and a man dead upon the carpet of the cover to make things look pleasant for you. My Lady herself wore a dressing-gown of blue satin a flimsy thing which suited her very well, for she was a pretty bit of goods, as all the papers said when the Earl married her. It was amusing at first to see her trying to give herself the airs of a Countess, but after we'd been talking a minute she forgot all about them and began to speak in her natural manner.

"Oh," she said, "what nonsense to send for you! It's just like Archie."

"Nonsense it is," cried I, "for what should be the matter with her Ladyship but the want of a scamper on her horse—and the snow's too deep for that, bad luck to it!"

She sighed and leaned back in her chair.

"It's not that, doctor," she says next; "not that at all. It's something else. And do you know I'm so tired of being a Countess."

We laughed together at her complaint, and I saw that the ice was broken. It was all very well to make light of it, but the colour of her face and the look of her eyes told me that something was amiss with her.

"Come," said I, "this is the very time for confession. There's no more curious man in Kent than Dick Rhymmer."

"Not so very old," said she, looking at me cunningly.

"Thirty-two, Lady Monkton," said I, "and as young as most of them. Shall I feel your pulse now, or will you tell me what the 'something else' is?"

She grew restless in a moment and began to fidget with her books.

"It's the house," she said shortly, turning her eyes away from me as she spoke.

"The house?" says I, "and what's ailing with the house? Is it not the finest house in all the county? Show me the like of it, and I'm no man of Kent; born in old Cornwall as I was."

She turned a few leaves of her book and began to sniff at her flowers.

"The house is all right," said she, "if I could sleep in it—"

"Sleep—you can't sleep in Monkton Abbey! Ay, but here's the ghost to frighten a family doctor with. Was it a white one? Indeed, and it would be odd if it were not."

I tried to put a good face upon it, but she was not the woman to let you have your own way.

"Oh," said she, "how silly you are! Why did you come here at all? And Archie is just the same."

"Now," said I, "we're not going to be cross with each other, and, indeed,

I'm very sorry for anyone that looks no better than your Ladyship. Will you tell me all about it, and make a friend of old Dick Rhymmer?"

"Not so old," says she again.

"An infant in arms if you like," said I.

I suppose it was that I had the manner with her, for presently she took up her story.

"Doctor," she said, "did you ever have strange dreams?"

"Did I? Ay, to be sure! Was it not a week ago that I dreamed I was married to a black woman, and that she wore a pink bonnet of my aunt's on the Sunday?"

For a moment a smile crossed her face. It was like a little rift in the clouds when a storm is blowing up from the sea.

"I dream always in this house," she said, as though she still had no mind to speak of it. "For the last ten days' sleep, I dare not lie down at night. Is that very strange, doctor?"

"My dear lady," says I, "tell me why it should be strange, and I will answer you."

She dropped the rose from her hand and sat straight up in her chair.

"Well," she said, "I will tell you what I saw last night."

An hour passed before she had done with it.

When I went out of the room my hand was shaking like a woman's.

CHAPTER IV.

A LITTLE FIGURE ON THE CLIFFS.

I told the Earl that his wife was in a very weak state of health, and that her nerves were about as bad as they could be. He had been out on the farm with a two-year-old colt, and he heard my news as though he expected it.

"Well," said he, "if Monkton won't cure nerves, it's a bad job. You must do your best, doctor, and I'd be glad if you'd look in every day. She was passed as sound when we left London, and how the mischief she is in this state I really don't know! Is it in the family, do you think? Yet, look at little Alice—her sister. There's a picture of health for you!"

I was about to agree with him entirely when he chanced to see my face, and, I suppose, there was something there to astonish him.

"By Gad!" he exclaimed, "you don't look any too well yourself. She's been telling you one of her tales—eh? Pretty awful, aren't they? Come in here, and I'll prescribe that pint of champagne. I feel like one myself when she begins on that tack. You chaps ought to be case-hardened. Of course it's only hysteria. There's no doubt at all about that, don't you think?"

I told him that there was no doubt whatever (God forgive me for the lie), and half an hour later I was on the cliff road, riding like some blackguard that has hired a horse by the day. Notwithstanding his champagne, the cold-blooded horror of the story I had heard from the woman's lips followed me still. No dream that ever was dreamed by madman could have been told in the same breath with the thing I heard in the boudoir. Turn my eyes where I would, they came upon some figure of my lady's sleep. It was neither weakness nor imagination, but just real terror—terror that might strike a child dumb or send a weak man to an asylum. And she had dreamed it every night for ten days! "In ten more,"



She turned a few leaves of her book and began to sniff at her flowers.

said I to myself, "you'll be in a madhouse yourself, my lady." And I believe she would have been but for what I did at the Abbey—though that's to come by and by.

It wanted a week to Christmas Day then; and there were few folks abroad upon the Margate road. The morning was one to brace up the nerves, ay, of a dead man. I never saw the Channel so blue, nor such a spread of sparkling, dazzling sand in the fifteen years I have lived in Thanet. The very breeze put iron into your blood. I was laughing at myself again by the time I caught a glimpse of Westgate Church and of a little figure coming over the cliffs there on an old grey pony which I remembered as the Abbey pony for the last ten years or more.

"Dick, my boy," said I to myself, "you're growing an old fool. There's a woman frightened you out of your wits with her dead men's tales, and here's another coming along the cliff to put some common-sense into your old wooden head. It's the bundle of mischief, my boy, and she's wearing the little sable hat again, and devil a prettier one in all Paris. Not a word of this to your aunt, old fellow, or 'tis a wiggling you'll be having, anyway."

She came up at the canter, a flush of health upon her rosy cheeks, and her little black curls peeping out roguishly over her ears and forehead. There have been some to say that her eyes were black as her hair, but to me they are blue—the best sort of blue which catches you when you don't look for it, and says, "There I am, my boy, and there's nothing better this side of Dublin!"

"Oh, doctor, I knew it was you," said she.

"That's a compliment," said I, "for I was just thinking I was somebody else."

"You have seen my sister?" she asked.

"Indeed, and I have; and a pretty tale she told me."

"That's what Archie is always saying; but she won't tell me anything, and I'm dying to hear it."

"I wouldn't be if I were you," said I; "it's only a nervous woman's fancy, and not pretty to hear at all. We'll cure all that by and by when she's more used to the house——"

"The house—I hate the house: I wish we had never seen it."

It was astonishing to see the flush of anger that came suddenly over her face. She had turned her pony now, and we were riding together toward the bay of the town. "God send my Aunt Eliza another road," thought I; and then went on with it.

"What's wrong with the house?" I asked when a minute had passed. "Is there any finer in the county? Indeed, it's a very beautiful house, young lady, and I'm sorry for your taste if you don't like it."

"I hate it," she said, ignoring me and speaking almost to herself; "we were far happier at Kingsbury. I hate all the big men who stand behind my chair; I hate the great dark staircase and the great ugly heads in the pictures, and the china in the glass cases. If one could only smash something, doctor. But you mustn't. You must tread on tip-toe or a man in armour will fall down. I'm sure there's something dreadful somewhere in that house. One of us will die there. Why could not they leave me alone? I never wanted to be a Countess's sister. It's too horrid for anything."

"Come," said I, "that's very hard on the gentlemen in armour, young lady. And your brother-in-law, the Earl, is he no more civil to them?"

She saw the drift of it and fell to being serious.

"Doctor," she asked suddenly, "will you be my friend?"

"Ay," said I, "to the Day of Judgment."

"Then will you send my sister away from Monkton? I know it's silly; but I'm sure she'd be happier. We have no home here. We are living in a fool's paradise. Kingsbury was a home to us, but Monkton will never be anything but a prison. How can people, who kept one general servant a month ago, be happy with two footmen for every chair? I hate the sight of them. Every day I think that the end will come. And Archie thinks the same. He knows that he has no right to be at the Abbey. He knows, as I know, that the Earl is not dead——"

"You know it, young lady—why, what in Heaven's name do you mean by that?"

She turned it off with a laugh.

"My fancies," she said lightly; "they always come true, doctor!"

"The greatest nonsense in the world," said I; "the old Earl died at Gilgit: all the world knows that."

She shrugged her pretty shoulders and evaded it.

"Will you be my friend, doctor?" she asked again.

"Of course I will."

"And send my sister away from Monkton?"

"Ah! that's not in my power."

We rode a little way silently. Then she said—

"A week to-day is Christmas. And we have no home now. How odd it seems! Good-bye, doctor."

She held out her hand to me. I saw that there were tears in her eyes.

"We must help them—you and I," she said prettily.

"Ay," said I, "with all my heart."

And with that she was gone, and I was telling myself, not an hour later, that of all the foolish fancies I ever heard, hers were the most foolish.

"But, my boy," said I to myself, "not a word of that about the friendship to your aunt—not a word."

CHAPTER V.

CHANGING ROLES.

'Twas a secret kept from my aunt to be sure; yet only at the beginning of it, for all Thanet knew something of the story before the week was out, and what I'd called my young lady's fancies were on the tongue of every second man you'd meet. Looking back at that time now—and it is only a couple of years ago—it seems to me wonderful to think that so much could have happened in seven days even to a man broad upon the wide road of the world, and not to a jog-along doctor that

gives his patients no better gossip than that of foal or filly, and has not clapped eyes on London these three years or more. Yet so it was and so it stands in history.

I say that I told nothing to my aunt but what any man might tell of his daily visit.

"There's a pair of them that see bogies in the great house," said I, "and all the medicine they need is in my nux vomica bottle. 'Twill be done with in a week, and you'll be having her Ladyship to call upon you."

"Ah," said my aunt, "she's coming, is she? Well, it was time, Dick. I'm a lone old woman, and I don't want any of your theatre misses here, so come or stop, it's all the same to me."

I saw she was vexed and pleased at the same time, but before I could get a word in, she asks—

"He would be called handsome, the Earl, Dick?"

"Well," says I, "he's a merry lad, with a face as red as mine, and curls that I'd put upon a china doll. And the new place is too much for him. He can't believe it isn't somebody else's. I heard it said that he wouldn't be surprised if the old Earl came back and turned him and his into the street again. Poverty's a sorry thing for those that once have put the golden cup to their lips. And what will become of the little bit of mischief? But, of course, it's fool's talk. She'll have more money than would fill our water-butt, and some scamp will come along and marry her for it."

I do not doubt that my aunt was about to make some observation suitable to the occasion, but the wind was lucky that morning, and the old bell at the gate began to tinkle just as her hands went up and her glasses fell off. They had sent for me from the Abbey again, and John, the groom, urged me to be quick.

"It's the master, Sir," said he; "he was took in the night."

"What," said I, "not her Ladyship this time?"

"No, Sir, she's up and about this morning. Wonderful better, she is; but I do hear the master is precious bad, and talking something horrible."

I waited for no more, but jumped up in the cart beside him, and was at the Abbey door before five minutes had passed. The bundle of mischief met me on the staircase, and a sorrier picture of misfortune than that little lady I never want to see. We had but a word together as I entered the sick man's chamber, yet that was one to mystify me.

"He has seen what my sister saw," she whispered.

"You're joking," said I.

"Look for yourself," was her answer.

I passed into the room and found the Earl sitting up in bed with a heavy fur wrap about his shoulders. His usually sunny face was as white as the sheet before him. His hands were twitching upon the bed-cover, as you may see the hands of a delirious man who has not many hours to live. A glass of brandy and soda-water stood on a chair at his side. He called often for his wife, forgetting that she was in the room all the time. When he saw me, he made a great attempt to jump up, but fell back again immediately, and he could not hide it from me that he was about as weak as any mortal man who is not packing up for the final journey.



Half an hour later I was on the cliff road, riding like some blackguard that has hired a horse by the day.

Yesterday there was no healthier fellow in Thanet. What the mystery of it was, the mystery of that or of the house, I knew no more than the dead. But to them I made light of it.

"Come, come," said I, with my hand going to his pulse, "and what's the matter with Lord Monkton this morning? Indeed, and I'm thinking there's just nothing the matter at all to bring a doctor from his second egg —"

He was mighty irritable, and cut me short with a word. I did not hide it from myself that I had a very bad case.

"Oh," says he, "to the devil with that! Don't you see I'm a dying man?"

"Then I'm the one to insure your life," says I; "and I'll trouble her Ladyship to bring a little neat brandy."

I turned to her, and our eyes met. She was a pretty little woman, as I have said, but Monkton Abbey had aged her already by a dozen years.

"Doctor," she said, standing a moment pitifully at the door, "what does it mean? Why are we all ill at Monkton?"

"That's just what I'll find out if I stop in the house for a month," said I.

She left the room, and I was alone with him. His fingers were still beating a tattoo on the coverlet. He threw himself back presently, and a shudder passed over his body.

"Tell me," said I, "have you any pain?"

He opened his eyes and stared at me.

"I won't sleep again—do you hear that?" he said, through lips almost shut.



The question set him straight up in bed, and he began to talk quickly. "I saw myself—dead in my own arms! They spun me round in space until I was sick—sick as a dog with dizziness. Do you hear, doctor?—I dare not shut my eyes—there's a hand at my throat to choke me when I do. I choked all night—"

"And why not?" I asked.

He gripped my hand in his and drew me down towards him.

"Because I shall go mad if I do."

"Do dreams trouble you?"

"Ah," he said, shivering with the fear of it and not with the cold I made sure, "I don't want to dream again, that's it. I should die of apoplexy if I dreamed it again, doctor—if I saw—"

He fell to muttering as though he had forgotten what he would say; but I pressed the question home.

"What was it that you saw?" I asked.

The question set him straight up in bed, and he began to talk quickly.

"I saw myself—dead in my own arms! They spun me round in space until I was sick—sick as a dog with dizziness. Do you hear, doctor?—I dare not shut my eyes—there's a hand at my throat to choke me when I do. I choked all night—"

There never was a more pitiful terror than this terror of his dream. If he had offered me a thousand golden guineas I could not tell him what the matter was.

"It's a nightmare, to be sure," said I, "and we'll know how to deal with that. A little morphia—"

"Will it make me sleep?" he asked.

"The idea of it!" said I.

He had not the will to reason it out. I gave him the morphia, and in five minutes he was sleeping like a child.

For an hour I sat by his bedside watching every shadow that passed across his face. When I was quite sure of it, and knew that he dreamed no more, I began to think of others waiting for me, and left him to his wife.

"Lady Monkton," said I, "there's something happening in this house which is more than one of my poor skill can deal with. If your husband is no better when I look in at lunch-time, I'll ask you to send for one who can set an old country practitioner straight. We'll have a specialist and know the truth."

"Oh," cried she, "and what truth can there be?"

"We'll find that out," said I, "if we have half the big men from London in this house."

I could see that she was very much distressed, weak as she was from her own illness; and when I had given her what comfort I could, I left the house.

But at lunch-time I was there again, and the first word spoken was by the little good-for-nothing in the fur hat, who met me at the Abbey door and gave me the news as I got off my horse.

"Oh, doctor," said she, "my sister's jewels are gone!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE LIGHT AT THE WINDOW.

There are days in all our lives, I suppose, when men and things we have viewed from afar come suddenly, as it were, to the touch of our hands, and we see them in new lights altogether. The great statesman that has been a newspaper

name to us for so many years—one day we meet him at the dinner-table, and he takes his glass as any other good man, and doesn't pass the cognac, and has an eye to the green peas which are hot-house grown and the Lord knows how much apiece. He cannot be the same fellow to us, for the future, be sure of it. We read his speeches as we always did, but the vegetables are there beside it; and we remember that the rogue is but mortal after all, and can ply a knife and fork with the best of us. And he's a lesser man for his very humanity. We take him out of the rack of our gods henceforth, for gods do not quiz the year of our wine, and green peas or red, it's all the same to them.

Some such thought as this was in my mind when I rode across to Ramsgate that afternoon. For days past, as you may imagine, I had been in the fidgets about Monkton and its people. That fellow who went down the cliff road at Birchington and had the very face of Willis, the dead Earl's valet; the strange ailment which troubled my lady; the young Earl's sudden illness; Miss Alice's odd fancies—one upon another, they were things to set a man's mind going and to keep his thoughts busy. But beyond the perplexity of it, there was nothing to lead me to this opinion or the other.

"Something's wrong at the great house," said I—and that was all I could say.

Yet a word spoken at the Abbey door had changed it all in a minute. Down I came—like a man that falls from a heaven of dreams to the sheets which keep him warm in his bed. "There's a thief in the house, and he's been drugging the people in their sleep. Give me twenty hours and I'll have him under lock and key," said I—and the very thought sent me along the Ramsgate road as a man that rides for his life or another's.

Put like that, it was simple enough, God knows. I'd read of fifty rogues in London who had done the same thing; and that one of them should be in Thanet was no very odd circumstance. Nevertheless, as I went galloping over to Ramsgate for drugs that I lacked, the mystery of it became the greater. What thief, I asked myself, would visit the Abbey night after night, risking discovery and doing himself no good? The servants there—why, no Archbishop was more to be trusted. There was not a man of them that had not been ten years in the house. If it were a common blackguard that had come out of London after our jewels, what kept him, bungler that he must have been, more than a week at the work? And where did he hide himself in the daytime? You can see two-thirds of the island from the high ground where the Abbey stands, and a stranger in winter time is gossip to us for a fortnight. There had been no stranger in Thanet that month of December, or I should have heard of him in any one of the fifty houses I visited. Nor could I put two and two together, as they concerned the fellow I saw on the cliff and took to be Willis, the dead Earl's valet. Willis—he wouldn't steal a cigarette from your case! A more dignified person never stood behind a man's chair. And if I had seen Willis's brother, the same was to be said of him as of a

common jailbird from London. One night in the Abbey would have served his purpose. No need for a week to do that business. Yet whoever had stolen Lady Monkton's jewels had been a week or more in her house.

I had given my promise to the Earl that I would sleep at the Abbey that night, come what might. There was nothing known yet of the robbery, except so far as Lady Monkton and her sister knew of it; and I counselled them strictly to keep it a secret.

"You'll never sleep in your beds," said I, "until the truth is known. Let one word of this get abroad, and the truth never will be known. I'm going into Ramsgate now for something that will set the Earl on his legs again. We're lucky to know what's the matter with him, and to-morrow I'll make him as sound a man as any in Thanet. But not a word if you please—both of you."

They promised me earnestly, the little good-for-nothing being almost as happy as the other. After all, it was something to know that they had to do with a human blackguard and not with something beyond human knowledge. All their fears, their vague fears about the old Earl's death and poverty to come again, had vanished in a moment. The patient was to be well to-morrow; Monkton was theirs; the splendid old abbey, the great position, the fine dresses, the carriages, the horses—no one was going to take them away, after all. They were like children with a toy, and there were tears of gladness in both their eyes when I rode away. Someone had stolen a few jewels. What did it matter if the scoundrel took a bucketful!

"Of course you'll come back," said the little bundle of mischief as I mounted Briggy at the gate; "it's all right now, but we shall be terrified to-night. And to-morrow the people are coming for the Christmas party. Do you know, doctor, I don't dislike the men behind my chair half as much as I did——"

"Ay," cried I, though I would have given much that she should not have said it, "that's human nature, young lady, and before the year is out you'll be needing a doctor with two horses to his carriage, and not a poor old beggar that has but one nag, and him going at the knees, bad luck to him!"

She kissed her hand to me, as roguishly as possible.

"Four horses, if you please," said she, "and a doctor that smokes a great black pipe—just like yours."

She was always one to change, like the mercury in the glass; yet, whether she meant well or ill to me by her mischief, 'twas not for me to say. I had other thoughts in my head as I rode into Ramsgate for my drugs, and one of them carried me to the police station, and to the sergeant there.

"Sergeant," said I, "it will be a bad night for patrols, yet they'll be going out all the same, perhaps?"

"Why?" cried he. "And where should they be going to?"

"Oh," said I, "if one of them was by Monkton Abbey two or three times this night, it would be company-like for the new Earl and his people."

You never saw a man so astonished in all your life.

"Do you mean to say——" he began.

"No," said I, "there's nothing more, thank you. 'Tis a full moon, and we shall have snow. Good-night to you, sergeant. There's a farm path by the chapel, and good trees for standing. You won't forget that?"

I left him with his astonishment, and sent old Briggy back at a good gallop through St. Lawrence and on the Monkton Road. It was late already, and dark as pitch long before the lights of my own little house came to my view. But excitement is a strange taskmaster, and I cared not a fig for all the ruts nor all the rabbit-holes in Kent.

"To-night," said I to myself, "to-night we'll find out what Monkton holds—be he man or devil."

And, indeed, I came near to finding out before ever I'd rung the Abbey bell: for what should I see, as I rode up to the great house, but a glimmer of light in the little window above the chapel, and there—God be my witness—was the dead Earl himself, staring out over the frozen lands we thought he had for ever left!

CHAPTER VII.

"THERE NEVER WERE SUCH DREAMS."

I say that I saw the dead Earl. Nevertheless, in the first minutes of amazement, and perhaps of something more than amazement, I was like a man that dreams he has waked up and then goes on dreaming again. There was the park, white with snow, silent, drear; there was the Abbey, with a score of lights shining behind its windows—its stained glass a feast of colour against the background of the night. But the vision, if vision it was, had passed. No longer did a taper yawn behind the stair-case window of the old Norman turret. What I had seen was a thing of an instant. It vanished, and that side of the house was in utter darkness. I remembered that it was the old wing—the wing stalked by all the fable-folk the Abbey has to show. Some say that none but the Earls themselves have the secret of it. The story is not true. I have been in the rooms myself, and the late Lord Monkton was the man that took me there. And whatsoever secret of them is to be known, that I knew ten years ago.

I saw the dead Earl's face, and for full five minutes or more I stood there in the snow gaping up at the window as a child at a show. It



What should I see, as I rode up to the great house, but a glimmer of light in the little window above the chapel, and there—God be my witness—was the dead Earl himself, staring out over the frozen lands we thought he had for ever left!

was just as though someone had struck me and was going to strike me again. To say that I believed my eyes or did not believe them would be to write nonsense. I could not even argue the matter.

"Great God!" said I; "my Lord at Monkton! Then he did not die at Gilgit! The Colonel and his Gurkhas brought back a lie! And this poor boy, who had not a shilling to his back a month ago—he's a beggar again to-night. And the little bundle of mischief—well, God help her!" said I.

My hand was shaking when at last I got my courage back and heard the great bell booming as a human voice through the corridors of the house. I feared, when I heard the dogs barking, and saw old Jacob waiting for me, that I should hear a word of it before I had crossed the threshold. "They

are gone already," thought I. "The little lady was right when she said that Christmas would find them without a home." But—and this was something new to astonish me—the old servant had a smile on his face when he took my hat and closed the door; and his welcome was just such a one as he had given me any day for ten years past.

"Well," said I.

"His Lordship's much better, doctor," said he; "surprising change since four o'clock. He's dressed—"

"Dressed—his Lordship dressed! And the others—Miss Wynne?"

He looked at me as though I were the lunatic.

"Oh, Miss Wynne—she's never been ill, Sir. And, begging your pardon, doctor, I was going to ask you—could you give me a little something for my back; it's bad again?"

I pushed by him angrily enough, and never did a man enter a drawing-room in such a state of flurry as I was. Yet, there, one in a black-and-white gown,

"No one will sleep in this house to-night," said she.

"You're not counting me," said I; "I'm worse than a dormouse this winter time."

It was a sorry attempt to be bright, as you may imagine, and years must pass before I forget that dinner or those that sat down to it. Well as I liked to be with the little lady in the violet dress, I did not like it that night, when every step that I heard made me think of the face at the window; when every voice seemed to whisper—"To-morrow she will have no home." For the matter of that, I looked to see the old Earl walk into the room every time the door opened.

It was so like the man to let the report of his death get abroad and to return home just as the cousin that he hated, ay, with the hatred of a lifetime, had come back to the great house and begun to forget his poverty. "He'll pack them off, bag and baggage, and God help them that have tasted the luxury of riches!" thought I. Yet the evening passed, and there was no sign of



As for the little good-for-nothing, she was almost lying on the hearthrug; and when I saw her there, surrounded by all those things that make for the comfort of a queenly English home, I thought that I would sooner lose every shilling I possessed than let to-morrow find her a pauper again.

the other in a violet-striped frock that was the very thing for her, were the two I had come to help; and a prettier picture than the pair of them made no man may want to see. As for the little good-for-nothing, she was almost lying on the hearthrug; and when I saw her there, surrounded by all those things that make for the comfort of a queenly English home, I thought that I would sooner lose every shilling I possessed than let to-morrow find her a pauper again.

"Come," said I, putting a good face on it that cost me a big effort, "and what's the news by this time?"

"There's no news," said Lady Monkton; "we haven't found the jewels—not one of them, and no one's been here. My husband is better—very much better. If only we knew the meaning of it all, doctor!"

"Ay," said I, "but we'll soon find out, Lady Monkton—and simple enough the story will be, I make sure. You've thieves about the house, and it's lucky that your best jewels are at the banker's."

She shook her head—and the other, the bundle of lace and silk and fluffy stuffs that stick to a man's coat when he's the right to them, jumped up and put her hand on my arm.

him. Eleven o'clock struck, and I was in my bed-room, and the Abbey was as quiet as the old road without, and there was no more sign of any tragedy than you'd find in the pew of your parish church.

I tried to set down all these things in plain language; nevertheless, the truth was strange enough to upset the nerves of any man. Times there were when I pooh-poohed the whole affair—the face at the window, the stolen jewels, the illness of the new people at the Abbey; other times when I tried to fit the pieces of the puzzle together until my brain was dizzy and my head aching. The more I thought of it the greater was the mystery. For, if Lord Monkton had come back from the dead, how did that account for diamonds stolen and ailments which would have puzzled the devil himself to treat correctly? And there was always the chance that I had been afraid of my own fancies and had never seen a face at all, and that the dreams which had terrified the new people out of their wits were children's nightmares to be set down to new ways of life and new excitements.

Well, I tried to think that it might be so as I switched-on the electric light in my bed-room and sat down to another pipe before the fire of logs they had

built for me. The room was up in the west wing, at the end of the corridor by which you reach the Norman turret and the old hidden chambers, which have harboured many a Stuart, ay, and many a cut-throat, since French hands built them and Monkton's Earls were the Lords of Kent. I knew that I had but to go on tip-toe along the gallery and open the panel behind the picture of the sixth Earl, and I could tell the truth once and for all. That I did not go may be set down, if you like, to my fear of that truth. All the arguments laughed at me. The dead Earl was not the man to go skulking about his own house as one who was ashamed of the light. If he were there at all, the servants would know of it; and if they knew of it, would they hold their tongues? Ay, but they might, thought I; and thinking it, the notion came back to me that I should have one peep in the Norman tower and quiet my troubles for good and all. It was just then that I heard a light step in the corridor, and jumped up, frightened as a ninny at the wind's voice, to see which of them had come for me.

Now you must know that I was alone in the west wing—a great silent wing, with the wind telling dead men's tales under the eaves, and ghosts enough in the

at night; and if ever I had a real woman's fright, that was the hour of it. The perspiration ran from my face when I switched the light on again; and no schoolgirl in a strange place could have hunted the cupboards and the beds as I did.

"Dick," said I to myself, "you turned that light off—why of course you did. Who else could have done it? Are you an old woman, then, or a man who's had fine champagne and more whisky than is good for him. Get into bed, Dick, and to-morrow you'll laugh at yourself. Ay, and bury the old Earl, my boy; he's as dead as Queen Anne."

It was a fair way to reason it; and I got into my bed without more ado, and drew the clothes over my head. Some would say that I was frightened, and maybe they are right. Yet I always had a will of my own, and I'd not been shivering in that bed more than the half of an hour when I dropped into a restless sleep, and from that moment the dreams began. God knows, there never were such dreams came to mortal man on this earth before or since as came to me that night! Some of them are horrid shadows even now; some I remember as I



It was a strange figure that I saw—a man with the face of a Hindoo, and having a Hindoo's turban of some colour I could not distinguish in the shadows. Nevertheless, the firelight showed me that he wore a plain frock-coat of broadcloth, and that he held in his hand a little glass phial full of a liquid which shone with a strange tint, half purple, half crimson, as he held it to the flame.

old threatening pictures and the great armoured fellows to send half the women in England into hysterics at the sight of them. But I was never one that cared a rap for the spirits; and, if you think of it, what the dead have told the living in this world is not worth the trouble of writing down. I thought that it would be Jacob or my Lady come to tell me that the Earl was worse; and I lighted a candle and opened the door at once to them. It took me somewhat aback when I saw no one in the corridor, for the steps that I had heard were unmistakable; but presently I went a little way toward the Northern Turret, and what should happen but that the candle was blown out, by human lips I'll swear; and there I stood shivering in the darkness of the passage.

"Who is it?" cried I, asking the foolish question we all ask at such times; "who's there—is it you, Jacob?"

There's no need, I suppose, to say that I was not answered. For the matter of that, the place was as silent as the grave and as dark. I stumbled back to my bed-room to be astonished for the second time. Someone had turned out the electric light while I was gone, and save for the red glow of the burning logs, you couldn't have seen your hand before your face. True it is that I could not be book positive about the matter at all. Yet I was sure as a man can be at twelve o'clock

remember days of my childhood. Yet there was none that was not a terror beyond the power of writing it. Once, indeed, I can mind me of a dream which showed me myself flung down from heaven to earth; and I fell, fell, fell, until my very brain spun round as a top. When it passed, I saw a great sea of frozen water, and everywhere on the surface of the sea were the graves of living men who lay beneath the ice, unable to move a hand, frozen to their very hearts: yet capable of thought and suffering and the realisation of time as other men are. Out of that hell they carried me to a great altar, where a man clothed in a flame of orange and crimson put a cup to my lips. It was pain past believing to drink of the cup, an agony like the drinking of molten metal; yet again and again they forced it on me, until my brain was on fire and my lips were burning coals. What power of life left within me it was which woke me from such a dream as that I shall never know. Years seemed to pass while I was struggling with one I could not see, yet must overcome for life's sake. Every muscle was strained to breaking-point, the sweat fell from my face, my heart pumped like some great engine, my very limbs were wrenched asunder as I stood grappling, arm to arm and body to body, with a figure of shadow-land, a phantom that never will have shape in this world or the next. Hither and thither we went, from heaven to earth, from the sea to the

shore, from the summits of mighty mountains to black gorges where the eyes of ghouls gave us light; and never once was the hand of the spirit from my throat, nor that death-grip eased upon my heart.

I say that it was a dream to rob a man of his reason; yet I would not dwell upon it in the manner of those who affright others because they themselves have been affrighted. How long it lasted I can but imagine. When I threw the figure of the dream from me, and saw it go down headlong, as from star to star and world to world, through the infinite heavens, a great sense of lightness and of buoyancy followed upon my release, and I began to rise high above the fields and to see all the cities of the earth spread out as on some mighty continent below. Far above me there was a great lamp hanging over the world, and I stretched out my arms to it, and went upward and ever upward toward it. Light of the lamp fell upon my face, a glorious iridescence, as of the rays of a thousand suns; but the path of the light was as a path of burning flame, and the heat began to blind my eyes and to scorch my body until, able to suffer no more, and crying with the pain of it, I turned downwards to the darkness and fell as a stone. And then the dream ended and my sane senses came back to me.

When I opened my eyes I was in the bedroom of the west wing. The fire still burned in the grate. I looked at it a second time, and saw that a man knelt by the blazing logs and was examining something by their light. Nor did I want a wizard to tell me that the man had given me the dream—and that to dream it again would be to die. A child would have known as much.

It was a strange figure that I saw—a man with the face of a Hindoo, and having a Hindoo's turban of some colour I could not distinguish in the shadows. Nevertheless, the firelight showed me that he wore a plain frock-coat of broadcloth, and that he held in his hand a little glass phial full of a liquid which shone with a strange tint, half purple, half crimson, as he held it to the flame. So weak was I for a minute and so dizzy with the dream that I lay quite still watching the firelight play on the fellow's face, and not wondering at all that he should be there. Somehow or other he seemed a link between me and the shadow figure I had fought with in my sleep. A premonition of it told me that I was to fight with him again. The door of the room was locked, and if I had shouted with the lungs of twenty no man would have heard me. "One or the other," I said, "for life or death."

This I knew well from the first, and it did not trouble me; for I was in that half-waking state when we neither reason aright nor take in all that we see. There was the lank Hindoo, holding the glass to the flame and showing me as devilish a face as ever I clapped eyes upon. There was I, with my hands still trembling and the drops of perspiration still upon my face, not caring sixpence whether I came out of it alive or dead.

"Dick, my boy," thought I, "you've got to throttle that fellow, and you must be quick about it. He'll have another look at you in a minute, and then

this time. The weakness of sleep held me still. As my strength came back, minute by minute, so fear of the man began to grow upon me. If he had been an Englishman it would have made all the difference; but that ugly face of his, those merciless eyes which were four-fifths white, the cat-like movements of the brute, affrighted me more and more as my whole reason returned. You might as well have asked your life of a stone image about to fall upon you as of that lathsome, creeping brute who, God knows how, had come into the Abbey. I knew that one argument alone would be good for him, and when five minutes had passed, and I felt that some strength had come back to me, I tried it upon



Monks' Abbey.

him. It was a flash of the electric light which I turned full on for an instant, and then as suddenly turned off again.

How I came to do the thing I don't know to this hour. Certainly I had no intention of doing it the minute before it was done—yet thus it befell; and who was the more frightened, the man with the devil's face at the fireside or Dick Rhymer himself it's not for me to say. As for the Hindoo, he sprang up with such a jump that the glass fell from his hands and broke on the hearthstone. I saw the light on his face for an instant, and it was the ugliest face I have ever seen in all my life. No cat could have come across that room as he did. No wild beast could have looked uglier. But I was out of the bed before he came up to it—and on the right side, too.

I was out of the bed 'tis true, but he had the call of the door, and we stood, one on either side, waiting for each other. I knew that I would be no match for him if he grappled with me—and it was then that the dream came back to my mind, and I remembered the shadow I had wrestled with in my sleep. "Once he lays a hand on you, Dick, you're done," said I. And I think to this day that if he had been quicker and had come over the bed at once, that would have been the end of me. But he couldn't make up his mind; and while he was thinking about it, I made up mine for him and remembered the patrol that I had asked to be on the farm path. Next moment the window was wide open and I was crying for help with the lungs of three men.

I heard my voice ringing out on the silence of the night; I heard the answering voice from the thicket by the farm, and never was there sweeter music. Twice the patrol answered me, and at the second cry the spell seemed broken. I ran for the door, but tripped as I went, and was within an ace of falling into the very fire itself. And that was the providence of it, for, as I stumbled, one of the blazing logs came to hand, and you could not have counted three before I had caught the fellow a crack on the head with it and laid him, as still as a stump of a tree, before the very fire whose light had first showed me his ugly face.

"And Dick, my boy," said I, "'twas the luckiest blow you ever struck," and so I lost all memory of it and fell into the arms of the first man that broke open the door, and came tumbling headlong into the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MATTER OF HOURS.

If the salt winds of Kent have been blowing on your face for fifteen years or more, and your dinner parties are the Saints' days of your year, and you've a good nag to carry you into the breezes at a gallop the mornings after the parties are over, it will take something more than the face of an ugly Hindoo and a dose of his opium to keep you in bed. And this is a way of speaking, for whether the fellow gave me a preparation of opium or whether it was some drug we've never heard of in our pharmacopœia, the Lord only knows this day. Certain is it that I'd nothing much worse than a headache when I woke next morning; and I sat up in bed to see the Earl by my side and with him the little good-for-nothing that I'd forgotten to dream about that night for the first time since I met her.

They were looking down at me when I awoke, and the Earl was the first to speak.

"Hush," said he to her, "he's waking up."

"That's the plain truth," said I, "and if one of you would take off the iron hat I'm wearing, I'd be in the new fashion altogether."



I caught the fellow a crack on the head, and laid him; as still as a stump of a tree, before the very fire whose light had first showed me his ugly face.

you won't like his ugly face so much. And you'll dream again, Dick, you'll dream again. Pull yourself together and do something. It's odd that you have the chance at all, but there it is, and now's your time."

You must know that I had not moved a hand, scarce taken my breath until

They laughed at this, and when they'd asked a lot of questions about me and my hurt, the little bundle of mischief ran off like a frightened rabbit the while the new Earl sat down at the bedside and began to talk to me.

"Well," said he, "the fellow's under lock and key all right, doctor."

I suppose I was only half awake, for I blurted it out at once.

"And the Earl," I asked; "has he been here again this morning?"

He stood up and looked at me. He was a boy no longer, but a grown man, with care for his friend.

"The Earl?" exclaimed he.

"Ay," said I, and for the life of me I could not keep it back. "He was in the Norman tower last night. I saw his face at the window."

Now the words were no sooner past my lips than I was sorry for them. Yet what was said could never be unsaid; and I knew that at the best it was but a matter of hours. Bewildered as I was with that strange night and all that happened in it, I could yet put two and two together so far as the Hindoo went. "He's one of the Earl's Indian servants come back with him," said I to myself; "and the rogue's a thief and a clever Indian thief besides." But the man I was speaking to knew nothing of this.

"Great God," cried he, "you're joking!"

"Ah," said I, "if it was a joke I'd be the happiest man in Kent to-day."

"Then you saw him yourself?"

"With my own eyes."

He began to pace the room quickly.

"He always hated me," said he presently; "it would be like him to have sent us the report of his death."

"That's what I was thinking of. He could have done that easily enough from that wild man's country where he was."

Three days ago I saw his man Willis down by Birchington. I feared to tell you—"

I was sorry for him, upon my word; sorry with all my heart. His was no woman's distress; but the silent suffering of a brave man, who does not think of himself, but of the weaker ones. And his wild talk was pitiful to hear.

"I've let Kingsbury, and the guests coming to-day," I heard him muttering; "the girls will feel it, my God!—it's hard on them—but, of course, you might have been mistaken, doctor."

"Ay, of course I might. There have been fancies enough about to fog any man this week. It was a thing of a moment—and we'll know to-day, anyway. He's not the man to skulk about a house. He'll come in at the front door, and come in with a good double rap, be sure of it, Lord Monkton."

He pressed his hands to his forehead.

"What a Christmas!" cried he, "great God, what a Christmas for the girls!"

"My house is yours," said I; "there'll be no greater day for us than that which sees you all at the Mead."

"Ah," said he, "we shall need all the friends we've got. And you're the best of them. It's a God-send that the fellow did not hurt you. We had the doctor from Birchington over this morning, and he says that nothing's amiss. I hope he's right."

I told him that but for the iron hat I'd got in the west wing, I was never better in my life, and he left me with the man to help me dress. Half an hour later I went out of the house without a word to any of them. The suspense of it was more than I could bear. I had the mind to learn the truth once and for all, and not to come back to them until I knew it.

And so I went away, and as I passed the library door I saw the little good-for-nothing with her head on her arms sitting before a table in the window. She was not crying, but there was that look upon her face I would not see again, ay, for a thousand pounds.

"And, Dick, my boy," said I, as I rode away, "you old fool, Dick. Is it rain on your cheeks, or the other thing? To see the child like that. And suppose you were mistaken, Dick—ay, just to suppose that."

CHAPTER IX.

FIGURES ON THE SNOW.

I was no great man when I got upon my horse, but the breeze blew fresh across the new white snow, and that put life into me, as only the breeze of Thanet can. Away yonder the sea was tossing diamonds upon the whitened sands; and in every house and on every face there was something to tell me that joy had come into the world. Odd it was, as I heard the merry voices and peeped into the cottages, where the fires burned bright and



"A Merry Christmas to you all," cried I; "for he's as dead as Queen Anne!"

the bits of holly had their berries to match the youngsters' cheeks, to think of those silent folk in the Abbey behind me—of them and the shadow on their lives and their future when no home would be theirs at all, save the bit of lodging the lad could give them away in the smoke and the darkness of old London. And I thought that the old doctor must be their friend, ay, to the last shilling, for the sake of the little good-for-nothing and the laughter that was made for her pretty face.

It was in my mind from the first hour of it, both to do the thing and to break the news of it to my aunt. And so did it take hold of me that a man, who called out to me as I passed him on the road, must call twice before getting the ear of me, and then in a way that showed him he had no listener.

"Doctor Rhymor, may I speak to you?" said he.

"Ay," said I, "it's a fine morning, to be sure—and a Merry Christmas to you."

I answered him at hazard, but he came up to my horse's head and stood before me.

"Doctor," cried he, "you don't know me."

As I live, 'twas the dead Earl's valet, the marble-headed Willis, that I'd seen at Birchington three days before.

"What," exclaimed I, "you in Monkton!"

"Yes, Sir," said he, as oily as ever, "I'm in Monkton!"

"Now, hark to that," said I, "we thought you dead in the wild man's country. Is the Earl with you?"

He shook his head.

"The Earl died at Gilgit, Sir—he's buried there. I came home with the doctor that attended him; I thought the family would wish it. It's not my fault that it's turned out unfortunate. They're all thieves in India, doctor. Lord Monkton must have told this man about the Abbey, and he's tried to rob it. I'm very sorry; it was for the best."

"Willis," said I, and I thought I should drop off my horse at the delight of it; "if he'd carried away the Abbey on his back, this would be a great day for me. You're certain about the Earl?"

"Quite certain, Sir; I was with him when he died."

"Then how the devil did I see his face at the window of the Norman tower last night?"

For a moment he turned pale as the snow. Then he smiled—the first time in my life that ever I saw a smile on his face.

"Oh, Sir," said he, "I was frightened once like that. There's a picture of the fourth Earl in the alcove there, and if you carry a light past it, it's wonderful like what his Lordship was to one looking up from below."

I slapped my thigh until old Briggy jumped again.

"Dick," cried I, "you old fool—you thundering old fool—you wooden-headed, cast-iron son of a gun—to think of it."

"I hope there's no offence, Sir?" exclaimed he.

"Offence, man, it's as good as a hundred a year to me. Why didn't you come

to us at once? I saw you on the cliff the other night—why did you go skulking away from me?"

"Me, doctor—indeed, I never saw you. It would have been an honour. And, of course, I went to the lawyers first. My duty demanded it."

"Ay," said I, "and see how easily one man can take offence from another that never even clapped eyes on him. Of course you did right. I'm going to the Abbey to tell them so—now at once; glory be to God for the news that takes me there!"

I left him standing in the road. He thought that he'd spoken to a lunatic, for he told me so afterwards. The ring that I gave at the great bell went near to bringing the clapper of it down. There were some who said next day that they heard my voice away at the farm by the sea mark.

"A Merry Christmas to you all," cried I; "for he's as dead as Queen Anne!"

* * * * *

After dinner next day, the little bundle of mischief spoke of it again in the alcove where the picture of the fourth Earl hangs. Downstairs, the new Earl's guests were beginning their Christmas games. We could see, through that bit of a loophole which passes for a window, the blazing lights on the snow and the figures cast upon it.

"What a queer place it is!" said she; "I don't wonder that you thought you saw the face." And then she went on, "We must be their friends more than ever now, you and I, doctor."

"Ay," said I, and there was no prettier picture than her little face in all Europe, I'll swear, "ay, but we could never do it in this house. I should be frightened of the ghosts. Down at my place we could watch them finely," said I.

"Oh, Dick," cried she, "what *do* you mean?"

Well, I tried to tell her—but I don't think to this day that she knows the whole of it.

And it was harder work with my aunt.

"Dick," said my aunt sternly, when I broke it to her next day—and it's astonishing how stern she can be when the mood takes her—"Dick, my boy," said she, and she held out her old arms to me. "God bless you, Dick!" said she.



"Dick, my boy," said she, and she held out her old arms to me. "God bless you, Dick!" said she.



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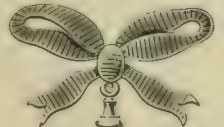
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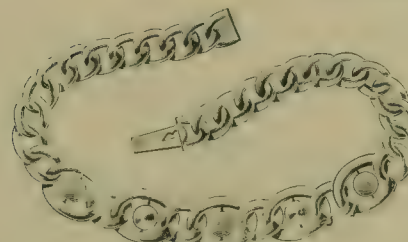
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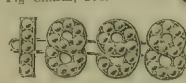
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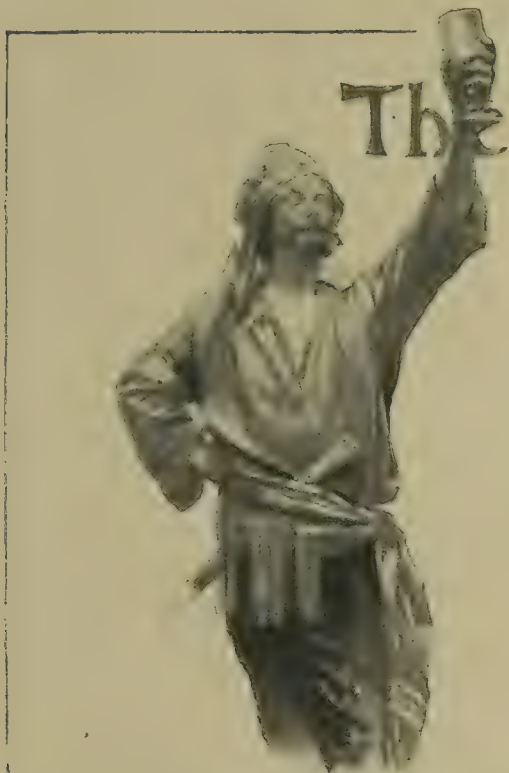
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by Q.

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WE were four in the *patio*. And the *patio* was magnificent, with a terrace of marble running round its four sides, and in the middle a fountain splashing in a marble basin. I will not swear to the marble; for I was a boy of ten at the time, and that is a long while ago. But I describe as I recollect. It was a magnificent *patio*, at all events, and the house was a palace. And who the owner might be, Felipe perhaps knew. But he was not one to tell, and the rest of us neither knew nor cared.

The two women lay stretched on the terrace, with their heads close together and resting against the house wall. And I sat beside them gnawing a bone. The sun shone over the low eastern wall upon the fountain and upon Felipe perched upon the rim of the basin, with his lame leg stuck out straight and his mouth working as he fastened a nail in the end of his beggar's crutch.

I cannot tell you the hour exactly, but it was early morning, and the date the twenty-fourth of February, 1671. I learnt this later. We in the *patio* did not bother ourselves about the date, for the world had come to an end, and we were the last four left in it. For three weeks we had been playing hide-and-seek with the death that had caught and swallowed everyone else; and for the moment it was quite enough for the women to sleep, for me to gnaw my bone in the shade, and for Felipe to fasten the loose nail in his crutch. Many windows opened on the *patio*. Through the nearest, by turning my head a little, I could see into a noble room lined with pictures and heaped with furniture and torn hangings. All of it was ours, or might be, for the trouble of stepping inside and taking possession. But the bone (I had killed a dog for it) was a juicy one, and I felt no inclination to stir. There was the risk, too, of infection—of the plague.

"Hullo!" cried Felipe, slipping on his shoe, with the heel of which he had been hammering. "You awake?"

I put Felipe last of us in order, for he was an old fool. Yet I must say that we owed our lives to him. Why he took so much trouble and spent so much ingenuity in saving them is not to be guessed: for the whole city of Panama comprehended no two lives more worthless than old Doña Teresa's (as we called her) and mine: and as for the Carmelite, Sister Marta, who had joined our adventures two days before, she, poor soul, would have thanked him for putting a knife into her and ending her shame.

But Felipe, though a fool, had a fine sense of irony. And so for three weeks Doña Teresa and I—and for forty-eight hours Sister Marta too—had been lurking and doubling, squatting in cellars, crawling on roofs, breaking cover at night to snatch our food, all under Felipe's generalship. And he had carried us through. Perhaps he had a soft corner in his heart for old Teresa. He and she were just of an age, the two most careless-hearted outcasts in Panama; and knew each other's peccadilloes to a hair. I went with Teresa. Heaven knows in what gutter she had first picked me up, but for professional ends I was her starving grandchild, and now reaped the advantages of that dishonouring fiction.

"How can a gentleman sleep for your thrice-accursed hammering?" was my answer to Felipe Fill-the-Bag.

"The city is very still this morning," he observed, sniffing the air, which was laden still with the scent of burnt cedar-wood. "The English dogs will have turned their backs on us for good. I heard their bugles at daybreak; since then, nothing."

"These are fair quarters, for a change."

He grinned. "They seem to suit the lady, your grandmother. She has not groaned for three hours. I infer that her illustrious sciatica is no longer troubling her."

Our chatter awoke the Carmelite. She opened her eyes, unclasped her hand, which had been locked round one of the old hag's, and sat up blinking, with a smile which died away very pitifully.

"Good morning, Señorita," said I.

She bent over Teresa, but suddenly drew back with a little "Ah!" and stared holding her breath.

"What is the matter?"

She was on her knees, now; and putting out a hand, touched Teresa's skinny neck with the tips of two fingers.

"What is the matter?" echoed Felipe, coming forward from the fountain.

"She is dead!" said I, dropping the hand which I had lifted.

"Jesu——" began the Carmelite, and stopped: and we stared at one another, all three.

With her eyes wide and fastened on mine, Sister Marta felt for the crucifix and rope of beads which usually hung from her waist. It was gone: but her hands fumbled for quite a minute before the loss came home to her brain. And then she removed her face from us and bent her forehead to the pavement. She made no sound, but I saw her feet writhing.

"Come, come," said Felipe, and found no more to say.

I can guess now a little of what was passing through her unhappy mind. Women are women, and understand one another. And Teresa, unclean and abandoned old hulk though she was, had stood by this girl when she came to us, flying out of the wrack like a lost ship. "Dear, dear, dear"—I remembered scraps of her talk—"the good Lord is debonair, and knows all about these things. He isn't like a man, as you might say": and again, "Why bless you, He's not going to condemn you for a matter that I could explain in five minutes. 'If it comes to that,' I should say—and I've often noticed that a real gentleman likes you all the better for speaking up—'If it comes to that, Lord, why did You put such bloody-minded pirates into the world?' Now to my thinking"—and I remember her rolling a leaf of tobacco as she said it—"it's a great improvement to the mind to have been through the battle, whether you have won or lost: and that's why, when on earth, He chose the likes of us for company."

This philosophy was not the sort to convince a religious girl: but I believe it comforted her. Women are women, as I said; and when the ship goes down a rotten plank is better than none. So the Carmelite had dropped asleep last night with her hand locked round Teresa's: and so it happened to Teresa this morning to be lamented, and sincerely lamented, by one of the devout. It was almost an edifying end; and the prospect of it, a few days ago, would have tickled her hugely.

"But what did she die of?" I asked Felipe, when we had in delicacy withdrawn to the fountain, leaving the Carmelite alone with her grief.

He opened his mouth and pointed a finger at it.

"But only last evening I offered to share my bone with her: and she told me to keep it for myself."

"Your Excellency does not reason so well as usual," said Felipe, without a smile on his face. "The illustrious defunct had a great affection for her grandchild, which caused her to overlook the ambiguity of the relationship—and other things."

"But do you mean to say——"

"She was a personage of great force of character, and of some virtues which escaped recognition, being unusual. I pray," said he, lifting the rim of his rusty hat, "that her soul may find the last peace! I had the honour to follow her career almost from the beginning. I remember her even as a damsel of a very rare beauty: but even then, as I say, her virtues were unusual, and less easily detected than her failings. I, for example, who supposed myself to know her thoroughly, missed reckoning upon her courage, or I had spent last night in seeking food. I am a fool and a pig."

"And consequently, while we slept——"

"Excuse me, I have not slept."

"You have been keeping watch?"

"Not for the buccaners, my Lord. They left before daybreak. But the



Little Bo-Peep had followed her sheep
Where the storm of snow had swept them;
And Little Bo-Peep ne'er went to sleep.
But warm in her cloak she kept them.

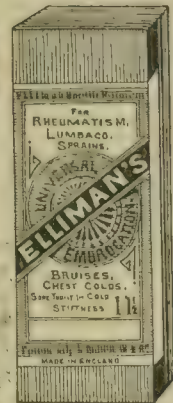
LITTLE BO-PEEP.

Then Little Bo-Peep began to weep
As the snow fell fast around her;
And her dog barked loud, and her dog barked deep,
Till the shepherd came forth and found her.



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dogs of the city are starving, even as we: and like us they have taken to hunting in company. Now this is a handsome courtyard, but the gate does not happen to be too secure."

I shivered. Felipe watched me with an amiable grin.

"But let us not," he continued, "speak contemptuously of our inheritance. It is, after all, a very fair kingdom for three. Captain Morgan and his men are accomplished scoundrels, but careless: they have not that eye for trifles which is acquired in our noble profession, and they have no instinct at all for hiding-places. I assure you this city yet contains palaces to live in, linen and silver plate to keep us comfortable. Food is scarce, I grant, but we shall have wines of the very first quality. We shall live royally. But, alas! Heaven has exacted more than its tithe of my enjoyment. I had looked forward to seeing Teresa in a palace of her own. What a queen she would have made, to be sure!"

"Are we three the only souls in Panama?"

Felipe rubbed his chin. "I think there is one other. But he is a philosopher, and despises purple and linen. We who value them, within reason, could desire no better subject." He arose and treated me to a regal bow. "Shall we inspect our legacy, my brother, and make arrangements for the coronation?"

"We might pick up something to eat on the way," said I.

Felipe hobbled over to the terrace. "Poor old —," he muttered, touching the corpse with his staff, and dwelling on the vile word with pondering affection. "Señorita," said he aloud, "much grief is not good on an empty stomach. If Juan here will lift her feet——"

We carried Doña Teresa into the large cool room, and laid her on a couch. Felipe tore down the silken hangings from one of the windows and spread them over her to her chin, which he tied up with the yellow kerchief which had been her only headgear for years. The Carmelite meanwhile detached two heavy silver sconces from a great candelabrum and set them by her feet. But we could find no tinder-box to light the candles—big enough for an altar.

"She will do handsomely until evening," said Felipe, and added under his breath, "But we must contrive to fasten the gate of the *patio*."

"I will watch by her," said Sister Marta.

Felipe glanced at us and shook his head. I knew he was thinking of the dogs. "That would not do at all, Señorita. 'For the living, the living,' as they say. If we live, we will return this evening and attend to her; but while my poor head remains clear (and Heaven knows how long that will be) there is more important work to be done."

"To bury the dead——"

"It is one of the Seven Corporal Acts of Mercy, Señorita, and it won Raphael to the house of Tobit. But in this instance Raphael shuts himself up and we must go to him. While Teresa lived, all was well: but now, with two lives depending on my wits, and my wits not to be depended on for an hour, it does not suit with my conscience to waste time in finding you another protector."

"But *they*—*they* have gone?"

"The Lutheran dogs have gone, and have taken the city's victuals with them."

"I do not want to live, my friend."

"Granted: but I do not think that Juanito, here, is quite of your mind."

She considered for a moment. "I will go with you," she said: and we quitted the *patio* together.

The gate opened upon a narrow alley, encumbered now with charred beams and heaps of refuse from a burnt house across the way. The fury of the pirates had been extravagant, but careless (as Felipe had said). In their lust of robbing, firing, murdering, they had followed no system; and so it happened that a few houses, even wealthy ones, stood intact, like islands, in the general ruin. For the most part, to be sure, there were houses which hid their comfort behind mean walls. But once or twice we were fairly staggered by the blind rage which had passed over a mansion crowded with valuables and wrecked a dozen poor habitations all around it. The mischief was that from such houses Felipe, our forager, brought reports of wealth to make the mouth water, but nothing to stay the stomach. The meat in the larders was putrid; the bread hard as a stone. We were thankful at last for a few oranges, on which we snatched a breakfast in an angle of ruined wall on the north side of the Cathedral, pricking up our ears at the baying of the dogs as they hunted their food somewhere in the northern suburbs.

I confess that the empty houses gave me the creeps, staring down at me with their open windows while I sucked my orange. In the rooms behind those windows lay dead bodies, no doubt: some mutilated, some swollen with the plague (for during a fortnight now the plague had been busy); all lying quiet up there, with the sun staring in on them. Each window had a meaning in its eye, and was trying to convey it. "If you could only look through me," one said. "The house is empty—come upstairs and see." For me that was an uncomfortable meal. Felipe, too, had lost some of his spirits. The fact is, we had been forced to step aside to pass more than one body stretched at length or huddled in the roadway, and—well, I have told you about the dogs.

Between the Cathedral and the quays scarcely a house remained: for the whole of this side of the city had been built of wood. But beyond this smoking waste we came to the great stone warehouses by the waterside, and the barracks where the Genoese traders lodged their slaves. The shells of these buildings stood, but every one had been gutted and the roofs of all but two or three had collapsed. We picked our way circumspectly now, for here had been the

buccaneers' headquarters. But the quays were as desolate as the city. Empty, too, were the long stables where the horses and mules had used to be kept for conveying the royal plate from ocean to ocean. Two or three poor beasts lay in their stalls—slaughtered as unfit for service; the rest, no doubt, were carrying Morgan's loot on the road to Chagres.

Here, beside the stables, Felipe took a sudden turn to the right and struck down a lane which seemed to wind back towards the city between long lines of warehouses. I believe that, had we gone forward another hundred yards, to the quay's edge, we should have seen or heard enough to send us along that lane at the double. As it was, we heard nothing, and saw only the blue bay, the islands shining green under the thin line of smoke blown on the land breeze—no living creature between us and them but a few sea-birds. After we had struck into the lane I turned for another look, and am sure that this was all.

Felipe led the way down the lane for a couple of gun-shots perhaps; the Carmelite following like a ghost in her white robes, and I close at her heels. He halted before a low door on the left; a door of the most ordinary appearance. It opened by a common latch upon a cobbled passage running between two warehouses, and so narrow that the walls almost met high over our heads. At the end of this passage—which was perhaps forty feet long—we came to a second door, with a grille, and, hanging beside it, an iron bell-handle, at which Felipe tugged.

The sound of the bell gave me a start, for it seemed to come from just beneath my feet. Felipe grinned.

"Brother Bartolomé works like a mole. But good wine needs no bush, my Juanito, as you shall presently own. He takes his own time, though," Felipe grumbled, after a minute. "It cannot be that——"

He was about to tug again when somebody pushed back the little shutter behind the grille, and a pair of eyes (we could see nothing of the face) gazed out upon us.

"There is no longer need for caution, reverend father," said Felipe, addressing the grille. "The Lutheran dogs have left the city, and we have come to taste your cordial and consult with you on a matter of business."

We heard a bolt slid, and the door opened upon a pale emaciated face and two eyes which clearly found the very moderate daylight too much for them. Brother Bartolomé blinked without ceasing, while he shielded with one hand the thin flame of an earthenware lamp.

"Are you come all on one business?" he asked, his gaze passing from one to another, and resting at length on the Carmelite.

"When the forest takes fire, all beasts are cousins," said Felipe sententiously. Without another question the friar turned and led the way, down a flight of stairs which plunged (for all I could tell) into the bowels of earth. His lamp flickered on bare walls upon which the spiders scurried. I counted twenty steps, and still all below us was dark as a pit; ten more, and I was pulled up with that peculiar and highly disagreeable jar which everyone remembers who has put forward a foot expecting a step, and found himself suddenly on the level. The passage ran straight ahead into darkness: but the friar pushed open a low door in the left-hand wall, and, stepping aside, ushered us into a room, or paved cell, lit by a small lamp depending by a chain from the vaulted roof.

Shelves lined the cell from floor to roof; chests, benches, and work-tables occupied two-thirds of the floor-space: and all were crowded with books, bottles, retorts, phials, and the apparatus of a laboratory. "Crowded," however, is not the word; for at a second glance I recognised the beautiful order that reigned. The deal work-benches had been scoured white as paper; every glass, every metal pan and basin sparkled and shone in the double light of the lamp and of a faint beam of day conducted down from the upper world by a kind of funnel and through a grated window facing the door.

In this queer double light Brother Bartolomé faced us, after extinguishing the small lamp in his hand.

"You say the pirates have left?"

Felipe nodded. "At daybreak. We in this room are all who remain in Panama."

"The citizens will be returning, doubtless, in a day or two. I have no food for you, if that is what you seek. I finished my last crust yesterday."

"That is a pity. But we must forage. Meanwhile, reverend father, a touch of your cordial——"

Brother Bartolomé reached down a bottle from a shelf. It was heavily sealed and decorated with a large green label bearing a scarlet cross. Bottles similarly sealed and labelled lined this shelf and a dozen others. He broke the seal, drew the cork, and fetched three glasses, each of which he held carefully up to the lamplight. Satisfied of their cleanliness, he held the first out to the Carmelite. She shook her head.

"It is against the vow."

He grunted and poured out a glassful apiece for Felipe and me. The first sip brought tears into my eyes: and then suddenly I was filled with sunshine—golden sunshine—and could feel it running from limb to limb through every vein in my small body.

Felipe chuckled. "See the lad looking down at his stomach! Button your jacket, Juanito; the noonday's shining through! Another sip, to the reverend father's health! His brothers run away—the Abbot himself runs: but Brother Bartolomé stays. For he labours for the good of man, and that gives a clear conscience. Behold how just, after all, are the dispositions of Heaven: how blind

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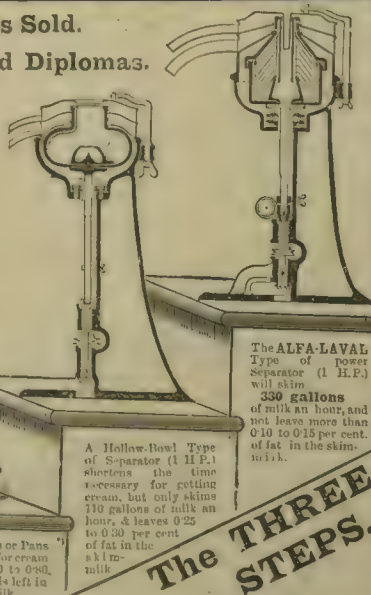
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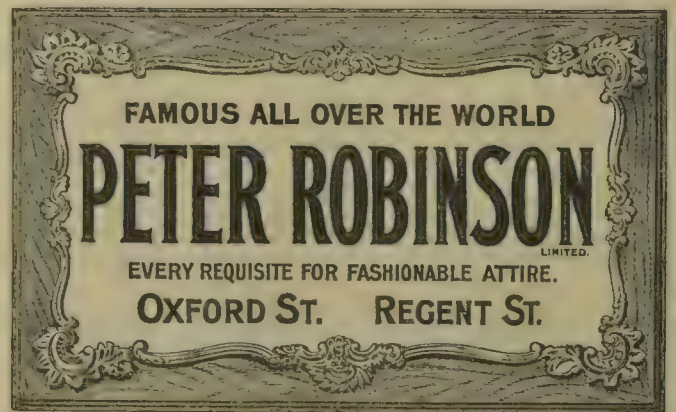
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flying down to his help, three stairs at a bound, when another scream and a roar of laughter fetched me up short. The laugh was not Felipe's; nor could I believe it Brother Bartolomé's. In fact it was the laugh of no one man but of several. The truth leapt on me with a knife, as you might say. The buccaneers had returned.

I told you, a while back, of a small doorway in the inner wall of the staircase. It was just opposite this door that I found myself cowering, trying to close my ears against the abhorrent screams which filled the stairway and the empty corridor above with their echoes. To crawl out of sight—had you lived through those three weeks in Panama you would understand why this was the only thought in my head, and why my knees shook so that I actually crawled on them to the little door, and finding that it opened easily, crept inside and shut it before looking about me.

But even in the act of shutting it I grew aware that the screams and laughter were louder than ever. And a glance around told me that I was not in a room at all, but in the chapel, or rather in a gallery overlooking it, and faced with an open balustrade.

As I crouched there on my knees, they could not see me, nor could I see them; but their laughter and their infernal jabber—for these buccaneers were the sweepings of half-a-dozen nations—came to my ears as distinct as though I stood among them. And under the compulsion of terror I crawled to the front of the gallery and peered down between its twisted balusters.

I told you, to start with, that Felipe was a crazy old fool: and I daresay you have gathered by this time what shape his craziness took. He had a mania for imagining himself a great man. For days together he might be as sane as you or I; and then, all of a sudden—a chance word would set him off—he had mounted his horse and put on all the airs of the King of Spain, or his Holiness the Pope, or any grandissimo you pleased, from the Governor of Panama upwards. I had known that morning, when he began to prate about our being kings, that the crust of his common-sense was wearing thin. I suppose that after leaving me he must have come across the coffers in which the Abbot kept his robes of state, and that the sight of them started his folly with a twist. For he lay below me on the marble floor of the chapel, arrayed like a prince of the Church. The mitre had rolled

from his head; but the folds of a magnificent purple cope, embroidered with golden lilies and lined with white silk, flowed from his twisted shoulders over the black and white chequers of the pavement. And he must have dressed himself with care, too: for beneath the torn hem of the alb his feet and ankles stirred feebly, and caught my eye: and they were clad in silken stockings. He was screaming no longer. Only a moan came at intervals as he lay there, with closed eyes, in the centre of that ring of devils: and on the outer edge of the ring, guarded, stood Brother Bartolomé and the Carmelite. Had we forgotten or been too careless to close the door after us when Brother Bartolomé let us in? I tried to remember, but could not be sure.

The most of the buccaneers—there were eight of them—spoke no Spanish: but there was one, a cross-eyed fellow, who acted as interpreter. And he knelt and held up a bundle of keys which Felipe wore slung from a girdle round his waist.

"Once more, Master Abbot—will you show us your treasures, or will you not?"

Felipe moaned.

"I tell you," Brother Bartolomé spoke up, very short and distinct, "there are no treasures. And if there were, that poor wretch could not show them. He is no Abbot, but a beggar who has lived on charity these twenty years to my knowledge."

"That tongue of yours, friar, needs looking to. I promise you to cut it out

and examine it when I have done with your reverend father here. As for the wench at your side—"

"You may do as your cruelty prompts you," Brother Bartolomé interrupted. "But that man is no Abbot."

"He may be Saint Peter himself, and these the keys of Heaven and Hell. But I and my camarados are going to find out what they open, as sure as my name is Evan Evans." And he knotted a cord round Felipe's forehead and began to twist. The Carmelite put her hands over her eyes and would have fallen: but one of her guards held her up, while another slipped both arms round her neck from behind and held her eyelids wide open with finger and thumb. I believe—I hope—that Felipe was past feeling by this time, as he certainly was past speech. He did not scream again, and it was only for a little while that he moaned. But even when the poor fool's head dropped on his shoulder, and the life went out of him, they did not finish with the corpse until, in their blasphemous sport, they had hoisted it over the altar and strapped it there with its arms outstretched and legs dangling.



With his left hand he pointed towards the altar. "For these, the mockery of the Crucified One which themselves have prepared!"

"Now I think it is your turn," said the scoundrel Evans, turning to Brother Bartolomé with a grin. "I regret that we cannot give you long, for we returned from Tavoga this morning to find Captain Morgan already on the road. It will save time if you tell us at once what these keys open."

"Certainly I will tell you," said the friar, and stretched out a hand for the bunch. "This key, for instance, is useless: it opens the door of the wicket by which you entered. This opens the chest which, as a rule, contains the holy vessels; but it, too, is useless, since the chest is empty of all but the silver chalices and a couple of patens. Will you send one of your men to prove that I speak truth? This, again, is the key of my own cell—"

"Where your reverence entertains the pretty nuns who come for absolution."

"After that," said Brother Bartolomé, pointing a finger towards the poor shape dangling, "you might disdain small blackguardisms of speech."

The scoundrel leaned his back against a carved bench-end and nodded his head slowly. "Master friar, you shall have a hard death."

"Possibly. This, as I was saying, is the key of my cell, where I decoct the liquor for which this house is famous. Of our present stock the bulk lies in the cellars, to which this—and he held up yet another key—"will admit you. Yes, that is it," as one of the pirates produced a bottle and held it under his nose.

"Eh? Let me see it." The brute Evans snatched the bottle. "Is this the stuff?" he demanded, holding it up to the sunlight which streamed down red on his hand from the robe of a martyr in one of the painted windows above. He pulled out his heavy knife, and with the back of it knocked off the bottle-neck.

"I will trouble you to swear to the taste," said he.

"I taste it only when our customers complain. They have not complained now for two-and-twenty years."

"Nevertheless you will taste it."

"You compel me?"

"Certainly I compel you. I am not going to be poisoned if I can help it. Drink, I tell you!"

Brother Bartolomé shrugged his shoulders. "It is against the vow . . . but, under compulsion . . . and truly I make it even better than I used," he wound up, smacking his thin lips as he handed back the bottle.

The buccaneer took it, watching his face closely. "Here's death to the Pope!" said he, and tasted it, then took a gulp. "The devil, but it is hot!" he exclaimed, the tears springing into his eyes.

"Certainly, if you drink it in that fashion. But why not try it with ice?"

"Ice?"

"You will find a chestful in my cell. Here is the key; which, by the way, has no business with this bunch. Felipe, yonder, who was always light-fingered, must have stolen it from my work-bench."

"Hand it over. One must go to the priests to learn good living. Here, Jacques le Bec." He rattled off an order to a long-nosed fellow at his elbow, who saluted and left the chapel, taking the key.

"We shall need a cup to mix it in," said Brother Bartolomé quietly.



From the parapet of the roof I saw the stained eastern window of the chapel a few yards below me

One of the pirates thrust the silver chalices into his hands: for the bottle had been passed from one man to another, and they were thirsty for more. Brother Bartolomé took it; and looked at the Carmelite. For the moment nobody spoke: and a queer feeling came over me in my hiding. This quiet group of persons in the quiet chapel—it seemed to me impossible they could mean harm to one another, that in a minute or two the devil would be loose among them. There was no menace in the posture of any one of them, and in Brother Bartolomé's there was certainly no hint of fear. His back was towards me, but the Carmelite stood facing my gallery, and I looked straight into her eyes as they rested on the cups, and in them I read anxiety indeed, but not fear. It was something quite different from fear.

The noise of Jacques le Bec's footstep in the ante-chapel broke this odd spell of silence. The man Evans uncrossed his legs and took a pace to meet him. "Here, hand me a couple of bottles. How much will the cups hold?"

"A bottle and a half, or thereabouts: that is, if you allow for the ice."

Jacques carried the bottles in a satchel, and a block of ice in a wrapper under his left arm. He handed over the satchel, set down the ice on the pavement and began to unwrap it. At a word from Evans he fell to breaking it up with the pommel of his sword.

"We must give it a minute or two to melt," Evans added. And again a silence fell, in which I could hear the lumps of ice tinkling as they knocked against the silver rims of the chalices.

"The ice is melted. Is it your pleasure that I first taste this also?" Brother Bartolomé spoke very gravely and deliberately.

"I believe," sneered Evans, "that on these occasions the religious are the first to partake."

The friar lifted one of the chalices and drank. He held it to his lips with a hand that did not shake at all; and, having tasted, passed it on to Evans without a word or a glance. His eyes were on the Carmelite, who had taken half a step forward with palms held sidewise to receive the chalice he still held in his right hand. He guided it to her lips, and his left hand blessed her while she drank. Almost before she had done, the Frenchman, Jacques le Bec, snatched it.

(Continued on page 42.)

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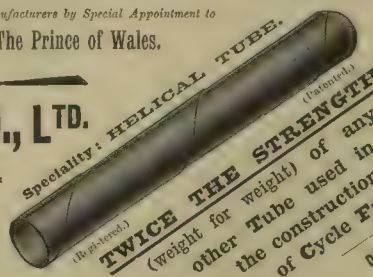
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"A DREAM OF FAIR WOMEN."

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IT was an hour past midnight. The roar and rattle of Oxford Street, that great artery of the West End, had dropped into relative quietude, broken only by the intermittent clatter of a belated hansom or a lumbering wagon laden with market produce on its way to Covent Garden. By some chance—it matters not what—I found myself in the great premises occupied by Warings, wandering up and down the deserted show-rooms, faintly lighted and looking solemn and awesome in the grim solitude of the night. Save for the night watchman, gliding with furtive step on his rounds, and a tireless artist, far away in some upper storey, coining his fancy into quaint and beautiful conceits, I had the vast building all to myself—to myself and the antique furniture which, in various styles and of exquisite beauty, occupied the different floors in confusing abundance. There were Chippendale cabinets and Sheraton chairs, Jacobean sideboards, antique oak grandfather clocks, Louis Quinze bergères, Louis Seize tapestries, Empire settees, fine old draperies of quaint design, rich specimens of carving, all the dainty products of the art-handicrafts of a dozen distinct periods.

Whether the atmosphere of the place stimulated the imagination, or whether the lateness of the hour induced the unconscious cerebration of dreamland, I am not, even now, quite sure; but suddenly the desolation of the place was transformed into the gaiety of movement and life. It was as if a dissolving view had changed the ice-bound rigours of winter into the warmth and joy of the sweet summer-time. Each piece of antique furniture had its occupant. Ghosts of the former times they were, but with all the semblance and actuality of living people—people with hopes, aspirations, ambitions, loves, hatreds, sorrows, and despairs. In one corner, seated at a Chippendale table, was a bevy of fair Georgian beauties, wearing powder and patches and drinking tea, at a costly price, out of "dishes" of delicate Sevres porcelain. And who is that ringleted, large-eyed dame with opulent charms leaning against a Jacobean piece of furniture, carved in oak that is genuinely dark with age? Surely her bold, sensual face is not unfamiliar. Has not Sir Peter Lely painted it, and does not his "counterfeit presentment" of the voluptuous courtesan, Louise de Kéroualle, Duchess of Portsmouth, emissary of France, and mistress of our gay Stuart King, still hang in the Royal Palace at Hampton? And is not that fascinating lady, with her hair dressed and powdered *à la mode*, who catches a glimpse of herself in a richly carved and gilt girandole *à la mode* Louis Quatorze, known to history as the intellectual and witty Madame de Maintenon, erstwhile wife of Scarron, the deformed jester, and afterwards the severely moral wife of Le Grand Monarque himself?

How they troop by, these ladies of the bygone time,

strange-looking in their old-world fashions, but wearing, in that phantom pageant at Oxford Street, the sweet and gracious charm of courtly manners and a personal grace! There is one among them finer and handsomer than many of less mature charms. She is playing cards *à deux* at a little Queen Anne table, and her companion is no less a person than great Anna herself, "whom three realms obey." It is the beautiful Sarah Jennings, the lovely and imperious Duchess of the great Duke of Marlborough, who looks as if she had just stepped in to while away an hour with her royal mistress, and devote her busy mind to plotting for an ascendancy in her

odd jumble of incongruous styles and widely different costumes; a mixture of the short waists with clinging draperies of the early Victorian period; the pretty Watteau dresses of the time when France's art was characterised by a dainty dilettantism; and the powder and patches and stately *modes* that were the vogue "when George the Third was King." There they sit and smile and prattle, and flirt and talk scandal, after the immortal fashion of their kind—sweet phantoms, delightful nebulous nothings from the land of shades!

A galloping rattle in the street—is it a runaway team or the fire-engine tearing past?—breaks the spell: the picture fades away; the hooped petticoats, the powdered curls, the macaronis with their mincing ways, the fops of the First Empire, the light-o'-loves of the French Court in its false, glittering, immoral days, the gracious and chaste last-century matrons of our own land—they have all vanished, sped back to their shadowy abode across the Styx; and there is nothing left but the Sheraton chairs and the Chippendale cabinets, and the Grinling Gibbons carvings, and the old oak settees, and the brilliant ormolu and buhl and hand-painted pictures of successive French schools of design. Yes; but has not each piece of furniture a history of its own, were it only able to tell it? "The Talking Oak" of Tennyson might find an eloquent counterpart in the oak hall-bench or book-shelf of some country-house of fallen fortunes, whose antique treasures have been ruthlessly dispersed, and is now awaiting a purchaser. Every article there has been the dumb, unobservant witness of incidents out of which the romancer might weave dramas throbbing with passion and interest.

Who trips lightly by, making her way to a vacant Sheraton chair? She is followed by a gentleman with Georgian frill and ruffles, silk stockings, and diamond-buckled shoes—a gentleman plain of feature, except as to his eyes, which sparkle and flash with an eloquence that floods his rude, forbidding face with a glow simulating beauty. He is the great dramatist and orator, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, in the heyday of his popularity, before gaming and the bottle have dragged him into the gutter. The lady is his pretty young wife, formerly Miss Linley of Bath, with whom he ran away in romantic fashion, and for whose favour he fought a duel. On the other side of the room, lounging proudly on a Louis Quinze couch, is the luxurious La Pompadour; and standing in a statuesque pose near a delicate Adams cabinet, admiring its treasures of *juience*, is the great Siddons, fresh from a triumph at Drury Lane.

Every chair has its fair occupant; every settee is the centre of a sparkling group. A strange medley it is of *belles Françaises* and lovely Englishwomen; an

But from the fancies of dreamland I turn to the more practical aspects of Warings' great establishment. Much that is beautiful therein is reproduced from the old styles, and it is important to note that all this charm is thoroughly consistent with cheapness. The reason why the firm can manufacture these fine specimens at so low a cost is that they have such great resources, the proof of which is found in their persistent success in competitive work. They set out with the idea of bringing well designed and soundly constructed furniture within the reach of the middle-class, and they have achieved their aim. Their completely furnished house at £500 has no parallel, and is a marvel of value and artistic taste. Work of this kind, founded on the great models, is an educative influence, and to-day, at this busy, palpitating end of the nineteenth century, when the world spins along faster than ever, and our modern civilisation gives but little time for rest, the chaste and delicate refinement of Messrs. Waring's furnishing schemes has a gracious and beneficent value in the household.



The Carmelite stood, swaying. Brother Bartolomé watched the cups as they went full circle.

Jacques le Bec, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, spoke a word or two rapidly in French.

Brother Bartolomé turned to Evans. "Yes, I go with you. For you, my child!"—He felt for his crucifix and held it over the Carmelite, who had dropped on her knees before him. At the same time, with his left hand, he pointed towards the altar. "For these, the mockery of the Crucified One which themselves have prepared!"

I saw Evans pull out his knife and leap. I saw him, like a man shot, drop his arm and spin right-about as two screams rang out from the gallery over his head. It must have been I who screamed: and to me, now, that is the inexplicable part of it. I cannot remember uttering the screams: yet I can see Evans as he turned at the sound of them.

Yet it was I who screamed, and who ran for the door and, still screaming, dashed out upon the staircase. Up the stairs I ran: along the corridor: and up a second staircase.

The sunshine broke around me. I was on the leads of the roof, and Panama lay spread at my feet like a trodden garden. I listened: no footsteps were following. Far away from the westward came the notes of a bugle—faint, yet clear. In the northern suburbs the dogs were baying. I listened again. I crept to the parapet of the roof and saw the stained eastern window of the chapel a few yards below me, saw its painted saints and martyrs, outlined in lead, dull against the noonday glow. And from within came no sound at all.

TRUTHFUL JAMES AND THE KLONDIKER.

By BRET HARTE.

We woz sittin' free—like ez you and me—in our camp on the Stanislaw. Round a roarin' fire of brush and briar stirred up by a pitch-pine bough: And Jones of Yolo had finished his solo on Bilson's prospectin'-pan. And we all woz gay until Jefferson Clay kem in with a Klondike man.

Now I most despise low language and lies—as I used to remark to Nye; But the soul of Truth—though he was but a youth—looked out of that stranger's eye; And the things he said I had frequent read in the papers down on "the Bay," And the words he choosed woz the kind wot's used in the best theayter play.

He talked of snows and of whisky wot froze in the solidest kind of chunk, Which it took just a pound to go fairly around when the boys had a first-class drunk, And of pork that was drilled and with dynamite filled before it would yield to a blow. For things will be strange when thermometers range to "sixty degrees below."

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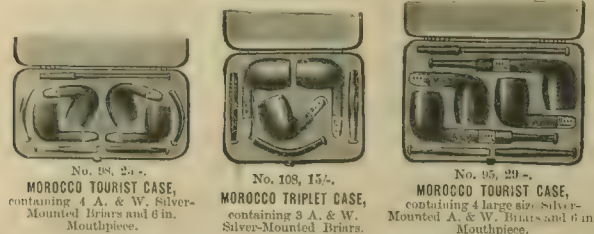
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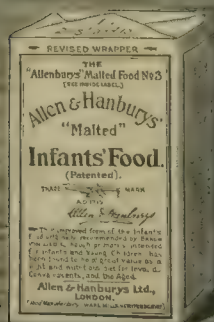
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How they made soup of boots—which the oldest best suits—and a "fry" from a dancin' shoe;
How in Yukon valley a corps de bally might get up a fine "menoo."
But their regular fare, when they'd nothin' to spare and had finished their final mule,
Was the harness leather, which with hides went together, though the last didn't count, as a rule.

Now all this seemed true, and quite natural too, and then he spoke of the "gold,"
And we all sot up, and refilled his cup, and this is the yarn he told:
There was gold in heaps—but it's there it keeps, and will keep till the Judgment Day,
For it's very rare that a man gets there—and the man that is there must stay!

It's a thousand miles by them Russian isles till you come on to "Fort Get There"
(Which the same you are *not* if you'll look at the spot on the map that of gold is bare),

Then a River begins that the Amazon skins and the big Mississippi knocks out—
For it's seventy miles 'cross its mouth when it smiles, and—you've only begun your route.

Here Bilson arose with a keener-like pose, and he gazed on that Klondike youth.
And he says: "Fair Sir, don't think I infer that your words are not words of truth,

But I'd simply ask why—since that all men must die—your sperrit is wanderin' here,
When at Dawson City—the more's the pity—you've bin froz up nigh a year?"

"You needn't care—for I never was there," said that simple Klondike man;
"I'm a company-floater and business promoter—and this is my little plan:
I show you the dangers to which you are strangers, and now for a sum you'll learn

How you can expect us—as per this Prospectus—to insure your safe return."

Then Bilson stared, and he almost r'ared, but he spoke in a calm-like tone:
"You'll excuse me for sayin' you're rather delayin' your chance to insure
your own!

For we're way-worn and weary, your style isn't cheery, we've had quite enough of your game";
And what *did* affect us—he took that Prospectus, and chucked it right into the flame!

Then our roarin' fire of bresh and of briar flashed up on the Stanislaw.
And Jefferson Clay went softly away with that youth with a downcast brow;
And Jones of Yolo repeated his solo on that still calm evening air;
And we thought with a shiver of Yukon River and the Fort that was called
"Get There."

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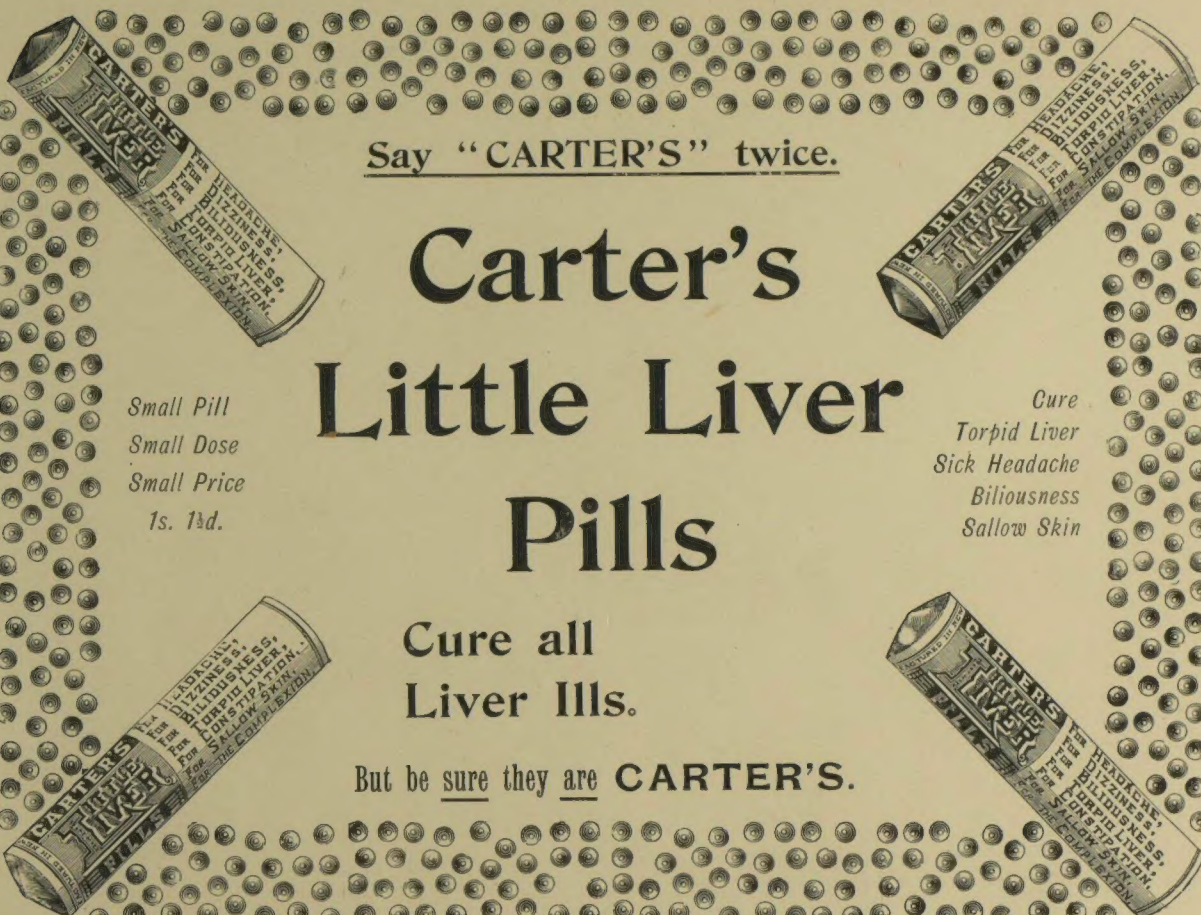
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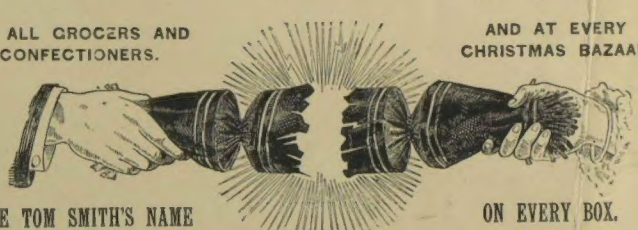
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